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Impacts of Positive Behavior Interventions and Strategies Programs on Educator Practices

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Master of Arts in Education

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

From an early age, I have been interested in social justice and the concept of how to rectify situations fairly and justly when someone has been wronged. As a young teen whose social conscience was awakened by the martial sounds of Rage Against the Machine--and later on, punk rock--I quickly carved out an ideological niche of sticking up for the little guy, fighting the power, and questioning authority. I hungrily read up on the stories of political prisoners and wrongly imprisoned death row inmates I learned about from these songs and liner notes and music videos. Abolishment of capital punishment and the reform of the criminal justice system in general were issues I came out particularly strongly on. The idea of re-shaping the power structures of society continued to interest me through my schooling and eventual teaching career. School is a microcosm of society. Perhaps it's not surprising that I'm interested in seeing school discipline continue to evolve to be more positive, equitable, and effective. The final part of this--effectiveness--is perhaps the most important piece; the best intentions in the world don't matter if a system is implemented poorly. For the purposes of this capstone, "effective" will be defined as stopping a problematic behavior while building on student strengths so that they learn pro-social behaviors that are internally motivating. My research question, then, is this: What are the impacts of Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) on educator practices? In this chapter I will lay out my journey to teaching, personal experiences with justice and discipline, the high stakes of school discipline for many students, my own professional setting, groundwork of PBIS, and questions of how to define success.

Journey to Teaching

As the son of two college professors, becoming an educator was destiny. But the path to special education began later in my life. I enjoyed doing hard, thankless, but essential work in my first few jobs after college. When I think about it, this tendency has always been consistent with my choices of leisure activities (football offensive lineman, bass player, rugby forward). The glamour and adulation experienced by my teammates and bandmates seemed less important to me than laying the essential groundwork for the success and functionality of whatever unit I was operating within. This would foreshadow my calling as a special education teacher.

I spent my first few years as a young adult working jobs that advocated for people with disabilities and canvassed in support of progressive legislation. One day while I was working at a group home for teens with disabilities, I helped a client with his homework. The thrill of helping this young man by teaching him something was a feeling I wanted to chase in my work regularly. After being given the tools to solve something and doing it, in a very short time, he was visibly more confident, happy, and proud. Solving a problem that had previously been a source of frustration was a “eureka!” moment for both of us, it would seem.

Shortly after that point, I began to pursue my teaching licensure and I soon found myself in a position of authority teaching high school in an urban setting. I had hoped to inspire and empower in my new calling, not break kids down and boss them around. However, I noticed that the dynamic between teacher and student often mimicked that of officer and prisoner, and it bothered me. I once witnessed a school resource officer, called by an assistant principal, to come into a classroom and frisk and cuff a student. The offense was passive work refusal which negatively affected no other students. I sat in more than one manifestation determination meeting

where the administrative angle was not to determine if the student's disability had a relationship to their problem behaviors, but to check whatever boxes they needed to in order to get the student transferred elsewhere/become "someone else's problem." In both of these situations I felt very uncomfortable and complicit in something bad. As a brand new teacher, though, I was not sure of how to broach this with my superiors. In my own schooling, I had learned that the best teachers must walk a fine line of being authoritative without coming off as too authoritarian, but in my earliest experiences teaching I noticed that school discipline sought to punish rather than make the situation right again. It was reactive rather than proactive.

As the years have gone by though, teachers in my orbit have heard and participated in much learning and dialogue about our roles as educators as unwitting participants in systemic racism and oppression, and more specifically the school to prison pipeline. As more information on that phenomenon came to light, teachers began to be trained on less punitive forms of discipline in schools. Suspension was replaced with alternative consequences that kept students in school; the consequence for an offense like property destruction went from detention to "community service" instead. Across the board, consequences became more logically tied to infractions and made more sense--restoring order and balance became the focus of school discipline rather than punishment. We began to focus not just on delivering consequences for negative actions, but recognizing positive ones as well through building-wide reinforcement initiatives. Most importantly, relationship-building took center stage. Commanding student respect was still very important, but respect doesn't necessarily need to go hand in hand with fear.

Now, after a decade-plus of teaching and learning in inner city communities, I am curious about the impacts of various reform initiatives. Data in my district shows that suspensions are down, as they have been replaced with different consequences. I believe that it is a positive trend that we are thinking about this right now, but is it working? To determine if a behavioral management system is effective, we can ask if school staff feel as if they are able to teach and reach all students while managing behavior in a way that preserves relationships and is equitable to all students. What makes a behavior management system fair, just and successful? What factors have impacted educators in a way that has moved them towards believing in and implementing systems that prioritize relationships and fairness rather than strictly coercion and compliance? Do students learn to conscientiously think about reasons for and manifestations of their behavior independently as a result of the system?

Personal Experiences with Behavior Management

I attended the eighth grade at a parochial Catholic school in Baltimore. The principal was old-fashioned, very strict and proper, a long time Sister of Saint Joseph. One time, when moonlighting as an Algebra substitute, she swatted my hand with a meter-stick as I drifted into sweet daydreams (this was 1997-1998, for context). The mild corporal punishment was not without effect. I straightened up and got back to work. She got what she needed from me as a student in that moment and I feared her, but I did not like or respect her. It seemed as if she did not have control or the tools to handle what was a very passive and low level offense. To this day I try and avoid interactions and situations of fear or intimidation, as I think of the long-term ramifications and consequences for the teacher-student relationship rather than just obtaining momentary compliance.

One day I was called into this same principal's office. I had no idea of why I had been summoned. When I arrived, I was directed to a supply closet to fetch a ladder. Still lost and confused, I soon learned what had happened: someone had trashed the boys' restroom and thrown dozens of wet paper towel balls at the ceiling. A classmate told the principal that I had done it. I protested my innocence (and maintain it to this day!), but it was no use. I carried the ladder up two flights of stairs and began to clean off the ceiling under my principal's watchful eye.

On its surface, this is a textbook example of restitution, which requires that after an offense, things are returned to how they were prior to the incident. The bathroom had been vandalized, and it was being restored back to its original state. However, this was a flawed consequence for a few reasons: firstly, I was not the offender; and secondly, the principal's aim did not seem to be to make all right with the universe. Instead, it became obvious that humiliation and degradation was intended. As I cleaned, I was treated to much tsk-tsking and grumbling about "showing your true colors" and "your parents should be ashamed." Whenever I am trying to decide upon a fair consequence for a student, I remember this story and check my intent. Am I trying to punish a student because they hurt my feelings or disrespected my authority/made me mad, or am I stepping back and restoring justice in a way that is respectful, rational and instructive?

One other story I'll share from my personal experiences with punishment and discipline occurred even earlier, when I was in the third grade. While the prior story deals with the nature of effective consequences, this one highlights disparities of discipline in different communities and how punishment is perceived among different races. At the time, I was attending a school

where I was one of three white kids in a class of thirty. One day after school, I was horsing around with a classmate's older brother (who was African American) outside of school in the snow. As play-fighting among boys tends to do, it escalated. Eventually, the shenanigans got to a point where the older, stronger kid was on top of me and about to hit me in the face with a gigantic ball of ice. I reacted instinctively, swinging my metal lunchbox hard and hitting him in the face, which drew blood and sent him home crying. I was shaken but happy to go home unharmed. Nothing happened to me in the way of consequences--from school, home or otherwise.

The next day brought the weekend, and I had a basketball game. My coach was the father of the kid I had hit. I didn't leave the bench the entire game, and when my father asked my coach why I was benched, my coach brought up the incident. He told my dad that if his son had done what I had, he would have been punished, possibly even suspended from school. He saw this as using his sphere of influence (coaching) to levy a consequence against someone who hadn't received one for hitting his child. It was a way to get justice for perceived unfairness when the school did not step in to do so.

Regardless of whether a stronger, older child should have been aiming ice balls at the face of a third grader, I don't think my coach was wrong about what would have happened differently had the tables been turned between me and his son. History has shown that African American boys are punished more often and more severely than other demographics in schools and in society at large. Had the tables been turned, I have no doubt that my classmate's brother would have been punished. I think about this anecdote often when looking at suspension and dismissal data--knowing what we know about inequitable punishments for young students of

color, how can we be as equitable and fair as possible when we must assign student consequences in a school setting?

School-to-Prison Pipeline

When schools are too punitive, students are often pushed into the criminal justice system prematurely for relatively minor offenses that could otherwise be used as teachable moments and learning experiences. Once this process has started, the dropout rate increases. Young people who find themselves in this situation then have the problem of inadequate schooling and no prospects for legal or adequate income. Many students who drop out will be in and out of prison, incarcerated for longer times, or dead. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the “School to Prison Pipeline.”

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) defines the school-to-prison pipeline as “a disturbing national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.” They continue to cite zero-tolerance behavior policies, discriminatory application of punishment and discipline and increased police presence in schools as criminalizing students from an early age and entering them into the criminal justice system prematurely. Once begun, this cycle is hard to reverse. Statistically, students caught in the pipeline are unlikely to graduate or avoid incarceration down the road.

As a high school teacher, I am firmly located at a crucial juncture in my students’ lives. Knowing that a harsh society will hold many of them overly accountable for petty offenses, how can we best prepare them and decrease the likelihood of them entering the pipeline? As educators and advocates, we have the tools in a safe space to practice positive behavioral intervention strategies, but will the police and criminal justice systems afford them these same

courtesies? Some teachers advocate a stricter, more punitive behavioral model in order to prepare our students for the difficulties of the real world after leaving school. However, it is many of these policies that drive children into the mouth of the pipeline to begin with. Can positive behavioral intervention strategies keep kids in school longer and therefore minimize the risk of being caught up in the criminal justice system as juveniles?

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

One of the most prevalent initiatives in school discipline reform in the past several years has been Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, or PBIS. PBIS has a self-stated “broad purpose” to “improve the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schools and other agencies.” Additionally, PBIS sets out to “improve social, emotional and academic outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented groups” (www.pbis.org). PBIS utilizes a multi-tiered service model, data- and needs-driven differentiation, and research-based interventions that are scientifically validated to effectively teach positive behavior to all types of students. PBIS is proactive and values early intervention before targeted behaviors happen. It is a reflective system that requires constant monitoring of student progress toward their behavioral goals.

There are three tiers to PBIS, and they are often presented visually as a pyramid with the first tier on the bottom (widest) part, second tier in the middle and third tier as the narrowest tip of the pyramid. The first tier consists of universal supports, which are intended to help with a majority of behaviors across a mainstream setting. The second tier, targeted supports, is for those students who are unresponsive to Tier 1 strategies. The third tier, called intensive supports, deals with prevalent problem behaviors that both Tiers 1 and 2 were unsuccessful in minimizing. This

system offers students a variety of differentiated strategies to meet their unique behavioral needs; in years past, when students did not change their behavior schools would then resort to more punitive measures. PBIS is a system that offers multiple “stops” before consequences for students and increases the likelihood of keeping students in school and learning. I aim to investigate in greater depth how these programs look in different school settings and what factors and variables cause them to be successful in their aims.

My Professional Setting

I have taught at the same urban public secondary school for slightly more than a decade. The school serves grades 6-12. The school currently has approximately 2000 students enrolled, with 87% qualifying for free and reduced lunch. 55.9% of students identify themselves as Asian American, 24% African American, 11.8% Hispanic American, 4.7% Caucasian American and 0.6% American Indian. 3% of students are identified as Multi-Racial. 36% of students at the school are English Language Learners, and 14% are identified as students in Special Education.

My job as a special education case manager requires me to wear several different hats. I have a caseload each year of 13-20 students, all of whom have Individualized Education Plans. Disability areas of students for whom I provide services include Specific Learning Disability, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Other Health Disabilities, and Autism Spectrum Disorder. I am responsible for scheduling my students into their needed SPED classes and mainstream classes, coordinating and managing their due process paperwork, and delivering service minutes in pull out Reading, Math and Study Skills classes as well as partnering with ELA and Mathematics instructors to provide co-taught minutes in those areas. In addition, I am part of a grade-level interdisciplinary team (IDT) that meets weekly to discuss instructional and

behavioral matters. The IDT works collaboratively to pull together different teacher strengths and expertise to reach the students who are struggling the most. Aside from classroom teachers across content areas, our team has a behavioral specialist assigned to our grade as well as a grade level assistant principal. Students with paraprofessional support as a related service on their IEPs have access to additional resources from EAs and TAs embedded in their classes. Being a member of many different teams and having this amount of different responsibilities can be overwhelming at times, but when all team members do their part the system works well even when things are hectic.

My building advertises that they have been recognized as a PBIS Exemplary School. Building-wide initiatives include Gold Cards, handed out from teachers to students who are witnessed doing something positive and later redeemed for prizes through raffle drawings. Inappropriate behavior is handled via a three-tiered system which puts the responsibility on classroom teachers to handle low-level, recurring behaviors. Teachers are expected to handle tier 1 and 2 behaviors by calling home to problem solve and build a collaborative relationship with a parent to help improve behavior. Examples of frequently occurring tier 1 and 2 behaviors in my building are off task on technology, work refusal, disrupting class or the learning of others, verbal abuse of peers or staff, and truancy/being out of area. Examples of infractions that may invite a stronger behavioral response are fighting, drugs or weapons, all of which result in a faster path to administrative involvement.

Of course, initial interventions do not always work with every student, so repeated tier 1 and 2 infractions can bring in behavioral specialist (or case manager if the student is in special education) support, all of which is non-punitive and more conferencing and “pep-talking” than

anything. The behavior specialist or case manager is able to use their judgment in determining whether students have properly processed behaviors and can return to class, and may either recommend or assign relevant consequences/pass along to administration if necessary. The original classroom teacher is often involved after the case manager or behavior specialist conference in a sort of mediated discussion, a point at which a determination is made as a unit (staff and student) whether the behavior has been processed and discussed appropriately and the student can return to the academic environment. If the conference is not well received, and the behavior is continuing, this is the point at which administrative support may be needed to assign a tiered hierarchy of consequences (parent phone conference ---> lunch detention ---> community service ---> after school detention ---> Saturday School detention ---> dismissal with parent readmit conference upon return). There is some student voice in determining consequences; for instance, students are often allowed to choose the day they serve after school detention to make sure it's a time that they can serve it on a day they have a ride home, and avoid a no-show and escalation to a Saturday School. Or, students can choose a week of Community Service (served during the school day) rather than a single after school detention. Community Service (cleaning up the school) is often assigned for behaviors like vandalism or property destruction, and detentions (extra school time) are often directly related to behaviors like truancy or wasting instructional time in some way. At the end of the day, the hierarchy exists to allow multiple levels and chances to receive non-exclusionary consequences before being sent home from school.

It is important to mention that documentation is of the utmost importance. The grade level team with which I work has developed an editable shared document where behaviors are

documented by student, so data can be analyzed and teachers can notice common threads and antecedent events throughout the school day in an effort to minimize undesired behavior and encourage students to learn better behaviors.

The idea behind the continuum of consequences is to offer as many options as possible before resorting to removal from the academic setting and sending them home. Naturally, some students work their way through the continuum of non-exclusionary discipline and end up having suspensions and dismissals for repeated behavior issues that are chronic and disruptive enough to negatively impact the learning of others. Some staff members have expressed frustration with the fact that some student behavior isn't improved or fundamentally changed in any observable way, or that it takes students longer to reach a "bottom line" consequence. Others have noted that the iteration of PBIS in our school puts a great deal of the onus on teachers to manage behaviors--in addition to lesson planning, managing behaviors of the class, monitoring engagement and grading, teachers also need to interrupt their lesson to have other staff cover their class so they can make phone calls home in private, or step outside in the hallway to problem solve with a student exhibiting tier 2 behaviors. The most common critique I have heard is that a small number of students receive chance after chance to improve behaviors. In the time that students are working on their behaviors or figuring out a better way to function, instructional time is lost and other students lose out on quality instruction and get less attention. Largely, teachers I have spoken with in my school are supportive and understanding of the mission and necessity of PBIS, and believe in our role in promoting equity, but they may have different ideas for what would be a positive way to run the program in our setting. I aim to further investigate the impact of these initiatives on student behavior and achievement in my building and beyond.

What is Success?

When researching and analyzing behavior data, much of it will be qualitative by nature. It can be difficult to quantify social learning and improvement of behavioral coping skills as opposed to tracking improvement of academic grade point average and number of passing grades in a class. However, one metric that we can look at are suspensions and dismissals. A number of students I tracked in my caseload in 2018-2019, for example, cut down their suspensions from eighth to ninth grade. One particular student went from seven suspensions in the eighth grade to only three as a ninth grader. An example of a difference in behavior management between the two years (setting aside the natural student growth and maturity that tends to occur between eight and ninth grade) was access to a defined refocus room to process behavioral difficulties with case manager, EA or behavioral specialist. This protocol was instrumental in getting many students re-integrated into the academic environment and likely cut down on the number of kids being sent home. Looking at the number of manifestation determinations among special education students is another way to gauge how successful a behavior management system is (10 days of dismissal or suspension or more require a manifestation determination and review of the IEP for students in special education).

Success of a PBIS program can also be qualitatively measured from a “quality of life” standpoint of staff members. Teachers who feel heard and supported by administration tend to be more effective in their jobs. Also, if staff are able to see students making gains academically or behaviorally, they will be happier in their work. Surveying groups of teachers can be an effective way to gauge whether they are happy with administrative vision and communication of expectations. Successful behavior management programs start from the top, and if administration

is clearly and consistently communicating that to educators they will do their jobs more effectively.

Therefore, most of the research will come from qualitative observations from both students and staff. Speaking generally, the students having the most success will be remaining in the learning environment, keeping documented behavioral incidents to a minimum, and showing growth and improvement academically. The staff having the most success will see behavioral incidents in their classes decline and academic growth increase.

Conclusion

On a personal level, PBIS has fundamentally changed my practice from when I first came into the teaching profession. As a brand new teacher, I expected all students to be naturally intrinsically motivated, perhaps because I projected my own experiences onto them. In my privileged experience, all of my Maslow needs were taken care of, my family had the education to know that nurturing and fostering academic curiosity was important, and I was free to be a good student when I was at school. In that mindset, it can be hard to imagine why students sometimes behave the way they do, and why they need things like extrinsic motivators to do things at school that are in their own best interests. Once I took into account the various backgrounds of my students, and how much different (and often more difficult) their experiences were from mine, I was able to have more empathy and meet students where they were at. Extrinsic motivation is fine if it's the "kick-start" students need to begin to learn positive behaviors. Of course the goal is to eventually wean students off extrinsic systems of motivation, but learning about PBIS allowed me to think about my students' diversity of experiences and

access the empathy necessary to meet them where they were at that moment rather than where I thought they *should* be at that time.

I got into the teaching profession with the intention to advocate and serve. Teaching a new skill and seeing the lights go on when a student finally “gets it” is a thrill that never gets old. In the larger scheme, though, helping my young charges stay in school and learn skills that will enrich their lives is the goal. In order to get there, however, my students must make it through to graduation. A compassionate and fair behavioral management system that offers chances to learn positive behaviors can help students avoid dropping out or entering the school to prison pipeline. Through my own schooling and over a decade of experience teaching, I have witnessed a variety of behavioral management techniques, both ineffective and effective. Recently, with many schools adopting and honing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, there is a wide spectrum of types of programs under the same umbrella. My aim is to research and explore what elements and variables make a PBIS system successful, in the interest of communicating that information to programs seeking more effective implementation of PBIS strategies. In the following chapter, I will summarize literature and scholarship surrounding the history and implementation of PBIS across many different types of classrooms and identifying factors that help and hurt behavior management programs in schools in an effort to help define what makes them succeed.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Introduction

In my decade-plus of teaching in secondary education, I have noticed trends of moving behavior management to a place that is more positive, proactive and effective. The punitive behavioral management systems of old are seen less frequently in schools, and administrators have become more conscientious about suspending students disproportionately. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports has become the new standard. The system requires teachers and administrators to be reflective, proactive, and data-driven in their efforts to teach and reward positive behaviors and minimize the occurrence of negative ones. Many schools are running programs that can be described as PBIS or PBIS adjacent--but which schools are doing it the best? Some may define success as improved test scores while others may look strictly at decreased office referrals and suspensions. I aim to study a variety of literature and research on this topic to answer the question What are the impacts of Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) on educator practices?

In order to conduct a study of which factors contribute to the success or failure of a behavioral management program, one must look at previous studies and conclusions other researchers in the field have come to. Many researchers and writers have looked into the inner workings of PBIS programs and have studied extensively the factors that make behavior management systems both effective and ineffective. This chapter will delve into the background and history of the PBIS initiative, critiques of PBIS, overviewing how PBIS looks in practice across different settings, outlining factors that hinder and help positive behavior management strategies in schools, and looking into measurement tools. The purpose of this chapter is to review existing literature in these areas through a variety of lenses in order to get potential

answers to the research question: What are the impacts of Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) on educator practices?

PBIS Defined

In order to begin to fully explore the question of how to define success of this specific framework of implementation, it is necessary to review the program's roots, intentions and practices. The National Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) was founded in 1997 via a federal grant coming along with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The purpose of this center was to "disseminate and provide technical assistance to schools on evidence-based practices for improving supports for students with behavioral disorders" (Engness, 2014, p. 9). PBIS is intended to redesign and support teaching and learning environments as "effective, efficient, relevant, and durable" (Engness, 2014, p. 10). This implementation framework has a goal of a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavioral support. PBIS also takes special care to include students who are from underrepresented groups and students with disabilities in its mission to improve the social, emotional and academic outcomes of students (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2019).

PBIS is implemented at both the school level and the individual classroom level. At the school-wide level, there must be common ways to teach expectations and acknowledge and reward appropriate behavior. The same goes for response to inappropriate behavior: there must be consistency across settings in the school. The system of PBIS has three tiers, and schoolwide programming should be driven by the success of Tier 1 discipline data. Administrators are expected to provide coaching, professional development, and monitoring to ensure that teachers are following through at the classroom level and the mission of the program is being upheld

(OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2019). Administrators who run successful PBIS programs also are sure to recognize staff. Teachers who feel appreciated and helpful are more likely to buy into the philosophy of what their administrators are doing, and therefore do their jobs more effectively and implement the program with fidelity.

In the classroom, teachers implementing PBIS need to be conscious of the designs of the physical environment, teach predictable routines, and post, teach, and define 3-5 positive classroom expectations for students to know and follow. In some models, students have input and a voice and collaboratively come up with agreed upon classroom rules with school staff. Teachers who run well-managed classrooms within the PBIS framework offer high rates of varied opportunity for students to respond, actively supervise their students' learning and behavior, and specifically praise their students frequently for expected or good behaviors. (Best practices suggest that teachers lean less heavily on evaluative praise--instead of saying "I like that you were nice to that student," say "I notice that you shared your supplies with your neighbor even though they sometimes get on your nerves.") Descriptive praise can be more effective than evaluative praise for several reasons. Students can take in the specific praise from the teacher and be able to replicate it in other contexts ("I noticed that you were able to walk away from that conflict instead of getting in a fight and in trouble," for example). Also, students may be less likely to think of themselves as "bad" if they are unable to get the evaluative "good job" feedback from a teacher. If a student hears a teacher praising other kids for a "good job" when they are doing otherwise, it is likely that they will see themselves as not a "good" kid. On the other hand, realizing that teachers are paying close enough attention to their behavior, noticing specifics, and delivering descriptive praise can make students feel more seen,

understood, and more likely to respond positively to their teacher (McCormack, 2018, p. 32). Teachers are responsible for creating their classroom environment in a way that discourages initial behavior violations from happening. This set of interventions such as rules, routines and physical arrangements that works for an estimated 80% of students is commonly referred to as Tier 1 of PBIS. These 80% of students should be able to give examples of what the 3-5 behavioral expectations are and what they look like in action if the teacher has been successful in setting up their classroom with effective Tier 1 strategies (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2019). However, what happens when students are unable to succeed or stay in the classroom with Tier 1 interventions alone? Teachers may need to adjust their practices, reteach expectations and intensify their support of more challenging behaviors. However, if these behaviors are chronic, long lasting and isolated to a few specific students, it may be necessary to explore the 2nd tier of the PBIS pyramid.

If Tier 1 is visualized as the thick base of the pyramid, Tier 2 is the thinner middle part. Tier 2 of PBIS consists of more targeted, “not for everyone” interventions for small groups of students whose negative or disruptive behaviors have continued through multiple Tier 1 interventions. For students with special education labels, this may include a Functional Behavioral Assessment followed by a Behavior Intervention Plan. If students in need of Tier 2 help are not in special education, however, teachers can still do things like rearrange the environment, teach replacement behaviors or team with parents and staff to develop a plan to minimize and stop problematic behaviors (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2019).

Finally, if students have demonstrated continued lack of success throughout the first two tiers, they may find themselves at the tip of the PBIS pyramid--Tier 3. Tier 3 is made up of

individualized support strictly for the most chronic or severe cases. Students who end up benefiting from Tier 3 interventions are often nominated by teachers or parents, and involvement in Tier 3 is driven by one or more screening tools. Some of these screening tools include attendance records, office referrals, behavioral questionnaires, social skills screening guide, the BASC inventory, and failed Tier 1 and 2 intervention data. (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2019).

Critiques of PBIS

PBIS is not without its naysayers and nonbelievers, however. As the PBIS model has become more prevalent nationwide, not all educators have been fully sold on its mission or methods. Since PBIS was essentially mandated by the 1997 renewal of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, some developers of other forms of school discipline reform models feel ignored or passed over by school districts preferring federally funded programs (Samuels, 2013, p. 1). One critic, an Arkansas-based director of an alternative school behavior improvement program, claims that the U.S. Department of Education is “violating its rules against pushing any type of national practice or curriculum” by requiring schools use PBIS (Samuels, 2013, p. 2). The department refuted this criticism by saying that while the laws very clearly prohibit establishing any sort of national curriculum, PBIS is not a prescribed curriculum but a set of guidelines that allows schools to choose their own approaches that work for them and accomplish the mission of PBIS (Samuels, 2013, p. 3). Other critics feel that the Department of Education’s recommendation is not prescriptive enough in offering administrative approaches to implementing PBIS. Since the Department does not promote a single method, some

administrators worry that some schools may get confused and not implement PBIS with the necessary fidelity (Samuels, 2013, p. 4).

PBIS trainers need to be very intentional about clearing up misconceptions about the initiative when teaching districts and individual schools--also, they must walk a line between being too flexible and too prescriptive--an approach that's too flexible could be too loose and ineffective, while something too prescriptive may be too rigid and only work in a very specific set of circumstances (Samuels, 2013, p. 5). Additionally, some PBIS critics take issue with the positive reinforcement side of the framework. The focus on tangible rewards for expected behaviors can condition children to seek praise or extrinsic motivation in school rather than developing internal drive or intrinsic motivation to do well (Samuels, 2013, p. 8). Finally, some school staff tasked with implementing PBIS have issues with how to navigate and steer students into Tier 2 and 3 interventions. Since PBIS is not a prescribed curriculum, schools may choose to use different screening tools, all measuring different things and having different levels of validity. Variability in the types of tools as well as variability in competence in administering them can result in wrongly placed students (Samuels, 2013, p. 15).

Educational practitioners are not alone in their criticisms of PBIS. Bruhn, et al (2014) lay out many common concerns from parents of students attending PBIS schools. One concern is that PBIS-friendly incentive programs can promote materialism (p. 13). Kids get used to doing things not because they're the right thing to do but because of the material reward. This provides a short-term result which often requires more frequent reinforcement and does not promote intrinsic motivation. To minimize this concern, Bruhn, et al (2014) suggest pairing tangible rewards with feedback and praise--or finding intangible, non-material motivators for students

(20). While behaving a certain way for verbal “pats on the back” is still an extrinsic motivator, following classroom rules for that type of reinforcer is a step away from material rewards on the road towards more intrinsic motivation.

Another common parent critique of PBIS is that it can be demeaning. One anecdotal story had a parent comparing PBIS to “training a dog” (Bruhn, et al, 2014, p. 13). Assuming all students need prizes to participate in expected behaviors, in addition to promoting materialism, could be construed as disrespectful to students who already have discovered intrinsic motivation. A final parent concern about PBIS programming is that it can promote labeling of students. Will students begin to think of themselves as “green” or “red” kids, as determined by a behavior-based color system, “good” kids or “bad” kids? Students could potentially see themselves as being evaluatively punished or rewarded, rather than having their behaviors responded to within the reinforcement system (Bruhn, et al, 2014, p. 13).

PBIS, when done well, requires that there is no ambiguity in what is expected of all students, across all settings. However, it requires that practitioners understand that it is not prescriptive to all settings and the responsibility is on them to run their own programs, collect data and be willing to change aspects of their practice to meet student needs. It is important to recognize though that all students need different levels of support and reminders, and consider the messages that may be sent when reflecting on our behavior management technique. While it is important to be reflective and critical of aspects of different PBIS-type strategies and consider their possible outcomes, it is also crucial to examine the big picture of why the initiative exists and the outcomes we hope our students can reach and achieve through PBIS.

PBIS and Equity: Avoiding the School- to- Prison Pipeline

A major driving force behind the PBIS movement is equity and opportunity for all students. One phenomenon that it attempts to combat is the school to prison pipeline. The National Council on Disability (2015) defines the school to prison pipeline as “policies and practices that push our nation’s schoolchildren, especially those most at risk, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems” (p. 5). Put more simply, punitive disciplinary measures put students out of school and contribute to them falling behind their peers. Frustration grows, leading to increased dropout rates and can lead to struggles to obtain gainful or legal employment, which can lead to incarceration. In their report, the National Council on Disability continues on to note that students of color (and especially those with disabilities) make their way through school with unidentified behavioral, mental health and academic needs which are insufficiently addressed. Those children of color who *are* identified as special education students, however, often receive worse services and outcomes in settings that remove them from their peers and end up being suspended and expelled disproportionately anyway. It seems like a catch-22: what are educators to do to help at-risk students of color in both general and special education settings to stay in school, graduate and avoid being swept into the pipeline? If the general education support is not addressing student needs, but the special education support is addressing them inadequately, what are schools to do?

The National Council on Disability report (2015) lists many responsibilities at the national level (Departments of Education and Justice) such as funding systems to evaluate racial bias and guide student discipline via national law (p. 9). They do make recommendations to be

undertaken at school level. The second key recommendation in the report specifically mentions “data-driven early warning systems” to zero in on students at risk for entering the pipeline and “refer those students for more intensive general or special education services and supports” (National Council on Disability, 2015, p. 9). Essentially, they are describing Tier 2 and 3 interventions within the PBIS framework. While the report focuses on students in special education and their risk of entering the criminal justice system before they’ve had a real chance in life, it is clear that Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports are cited as a tool to enhance equity and education for the most vulnerable students. Later in this chapter, literature will be reviewed that offers further, more specific strategies and steps for using PBIS to most effectively deliver services to students in special education and in general.

PBIS Across Different Educational Settings

Just as academic instruction must be differentiated for diverse age groups, PBIS can appear differently when implemented from elementary through secondary settings. It can also have different faces across different disability areas of special education. Some strategies that are very effective with a particular group may not work at all with another; likewise, some positive reinforcers that don’t work at all with one grade level will greatly motivate and help change the behavior of another. In this section different age and disability groups will be looked at and the types of PBIS strategies that work best for each will be touched upon.

Elementary. With younger students, studies have found that positive reinforcement is especially effective when running PBIS programs both on an individual and group level. One study done at an elementary school in Illinois discussed students being given tickets when they are “caught doing well” (Sinnott, 2009, p. 23). These tickets are then able to be redeemed for

tangible reinforcements at a school or classroom store. Tangible reinforcement (toys, treats, games) work well on the individual level, especially with younger students.

However, what effective ways are there to get less-invested students on board with a positive reinforcement plan, or to get motivated students to look beyond themselves and think of the good of the group? Sinnott mentions from the Illinois elementary school study that the aforementioned tickets given for positive individual behavior can all be pooled together which result in a whole school celebration (movie, pizza party, etc). This can result in positive peer pressure to follow expectations and “gives each student a stake in all the other students’ behavior” (Sinott, 2009, p. 23). Individual goals are helpful for many, but tying those individual goals to a larger group goal can help young students begin to learn good citizenship (Sinnott, 2009, p. 25).

Secondary. While younger students tend to gravitate towards tangible rewards for positive behavior, students in middle school and high school are often motivated by different things, such as experiences and free time. Instead of having a classwide system where a teacher keeps inventory of all students’ behaviors and rewards them, many secondary schools implement positive reinforcement plans that put emphasis on the student reaching out to teachers for feedback, as in a monitor slip or check in/check out system. In an Illinois study of several secondary schools, Positive Behavior contracts were implemented for students who needed further intervention (Tier 2). In this particular school, decision-making to select the students was driven by Tier 1 data across the school. Teachers and other staff involved in this study rated the impact of these interventions with the targeted students as “Very High” (Eber, et al, 2002, p. 5). Data from this school also showed a 71% reduction in the number of students who received 5 or

more In-School Suspension (ISS) referrals. This shows that the students who previously had the most referrals were able to remain in class due to the contract/monitor slip intervention.

Another crucial piece of PBIS in secondary schools is establishing a consistent expectation of behavior across the home to school continuum. When parents are informed of and on board with the efforts of teachers, they form a partnership which keeps students accountable for good behavior as they grow and become more independent throughout the secondary school years. This requires school to home communication, especially for students with more chronic problems in Tiers 2 and 3. According to Eber, et al (2002), school staff are learning to “engage families, community agencies, and natural support persons to create teams that can design effective behavior change strategies for students” (p. 5). These teams can then collaborate to design individualized interventions across school, home and community settings. As students get older and become more active in the community, it is increasingly important that school staff is communicative with outside agencies and families alike.

Special Education. Modern trends in education have more students in special education than ever before included in mainstream courses. As a result, many students with special education needs benefit from the same Tier 1 interventions in their co-taught courses as their nondisabled peers. However, just as IEP means “Individualized Education Plan,” educators realize that the “one size fits most” ethos of PBIS Tier 1 may not be sufficient. Students in co-taught classes who have disabilities may need further differentiation from the standard Tier 2 and 3 interventions, and teachers in self-contained or pull-out special education classrooms have their own sets of challenges as well.

Identifying the function of behaviors can be useful in managing behaviors of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). If staff are able to understand what a student is trying to accomplish with a certain behavior, or notice a pattern of where and when the behavior is occurring, they can more effectively predict the occurrences and minimize them by being proactive. Many special education teachers are already well versed in writing Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs). When looking at all of the data from various students, an Illinois study showed that one particular school found that student motivation for problem behaviors were mainly attention, work avoidance, and expression of anger--and that they overwhelmingly occurred in the cafeteria, playground and bus settings. Staff at this school was able to adjust their techniques and ended up reporting a 47% reduction in suspensions from the previous year (Eber, et al, 2002, p. 6). It is important to note that not all of the students being suspended had EBD as a diagnosis--however, what this data shows is that some techniques thought of as best practices and tools explicitly for special education (FBAs, BIPs) are actually valuable when confronting any problem behavior, regardless of special education evaluation status.

Much research has also been done specifically on self-contained special education programs for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Self-contained programs for students with EBD often look different in terms of class size, demographics, and flexibility. Many EBD teachers seem to be more laid back than those in other disciplines, out of necessity. However, that is not to say that they are unstructured: Students with EBD require a high level of fidelity in the implementation of all three tiers of PBIS interventions. (Benner, et al, 2010, p. 86). Staffing classrooms with highly qualified teachers in the area of EBD is difficult: as the

disability area grew rapidly and more and more students were identified as having the disability, the number of teachers did not correspondingly grow. As a result, principals are often forced to fill vacancies with less qualified or experienced teachers who are less likely to implement PBIS programming at expert levels (Benner, et al, 2010, p. 86). Further complicating the situation, the job of EBD teacher is not easy: due to the nature of the wide spectrum of different behaviors and their functions, the self contained teacher must be intimately familiar with all three tiers of the PBIS framework. In order to run a program successfully, teachers of self-contained EBD classrooms must be flexible yet consistent and have many tools at their disposal as well as the knowledge of when to use each tool. Fidelity to PBIS programming pays off--Benner, et al (2010) mention this in their study conducted across self-contained EBD classrooms in elementary and secondary settings. "Statistically significant reductions were found in the pre-and post-test scores of students...on Thought Problems, Attention Problems, and Aggression." (p. 94). If a self-contained EBD/PBIS classroom is to be successful, the study would suggest that having an experienced teacher willing to stick to the system faithfully is a major factor. Building the capacity of teachers to be able to implement and sustain PBIS in their self-contained settings can be done via periodic workshops and trainings, but that is not an easy cure-all: ongoing coaching and attention to fidelity are crucial in significantly reducing problem behaviors of students with EBD (Benner, et al, 2010, p. 96).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is another disability area on which there is PBIS research on best practices. Approximately 1 in 68 students are estimated to have ASD (Crossen & Grant, 2014, p. 3). With education trending towards more inclusion for students with special education needs, increasing numbers of students with this disability find themselves in general

education classes. Many teachers may feel underprepared to deal with the behaviors of students with ASD in their classroom, even when they are appropriately placed and in their correct least restrictive environment. However, some slight modifications to the existing PBIS framework can work well for students with autism who are in the general education setting.

Some students with ASD may become overwhelmed with the sheer number of tasks and people in the general education classroom, especially if they are more accustomed to a smaller setting. The PBIS guideline of 3-5 simple, positively stated rules is good for students with ASD, especially if they are frequently reviewed (Crossen & Grant, 2014, p. 5). Knowing the guidelines and exactly what the expectations are can decrease anxiety and cause the students to feel more comfortable and at ease and therefore ready to learn. Students with ASD are often accustomed to visuals. Teachers in general education classes who hope to teach expectations, as well as see academic success, might choose to provide visuals for behavioral and instructional expectations (Crossen & Grant, 2014, p. 6). Finally, the existing PBIS methods of both tangible and verbal rewards still applies for all students. If these can be tied in with individual student interests and applied at a higher rate, students with ASD may feel more comfortable in the classroom.

Other Health Disability (OHD) is another special education label that presents a unique set of challenges to any behavior management system. OHD means “having limited strength, endurance, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened or diminished alertness to environmental stimuli, with respect to the educational environment that is due to a broad range of medically diagnosed chronic or acute health conditions that adversely affect a pupil’s academic performance” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013, p. 13). Given the broad scope of the definition of the disability, students with OHD can display a wide range of academic and

behavioral challenges. In order to qualify for OHD, the student needs to display three or more of the following eight criteria: absenteeism linked to the medical diagnosis; health care procedures during the school day; medications that adversely affect learning and focus; limited physical strength and endurance; heightened or diminished alertness; impaired ability to manage and organize materials; and impaired abilities to follow directions or complete a task (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013, p. 14). As a result of how far ranging these criteria are, and even the spectrum of how behaviors within an individual criterion can vary or fluctuate, there is a lot of different advice and strategies within the literature surrounding OHD and not a single one-size-fits-all approach.

One area covered by the Other Health Disability umbrella is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The population of children who are diagnosed with ADHD are heterogeneous, with every student as an individual presenting unique characteristics (Haraway, 2012, p. 17). As of 2016, the Center for Disease Control reported that 64% of children with ADHD also had a “mental, emotional or behavioral disorder” and 52% had a “behavior or conduct problem.” 33% of parents of students with ADHD also reported that their children had anxiety as well (Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, 2016). So while students with ADHD can share characteristics with students who have different disability labels such as EBD, it is less predictable and each student must be looked at as an individual case when determining which behavioral interventions would be appropriate and effective. Given that a significant amount of tier two and three behaviors come from students with ADHD, much of the literature on strategies focuses upon that particular demographic of the OHD disability area.

Any teacher who has spent a good deal of time with students who have ADHD will say that consistency, patience and repetition are the keys to success. Unsurprisingly, data collection methods and assessments that help teachers make behavior management decisions need to be implemented consistently as well. One tier one/two intervention focuses on the academic side--Curriculum Based Measurements. Individual students who are struggling can be given CBMs to identify their levels of functioning and monitor, celebrate and enhance learning (Haraway, 2012, p. 18). These probes can also function as diagnostic tests to make sure students are in the appropriate setting and can help teachers make decisions about how to deliver instruction differently or advocate for more student support. Haraway (2012) argues that without this early academic intervention, behavior interventions will not be as successful as they could be--“The fundamentals of CBM are the foundation for quality behavioral interventions” (p. 18). If done properly and consistently, understanding the student’s academic strengths and struggles can be an effective first step to helping students with ADHD in the classroom.

Another tier one /tier two intervention is simply tracking office referrals which are logged dutifully and consistently, with students who meet a predetermined “cut-off” point receiving more intensive, small group support to help develop positive behaviors (Haraway, 2012, p. 18). Tracking referrals can also help school staff notice patterns of behavior--time of day, class period, etc. and then understand the trigger events or reasons for student behavior. Haraway also mentions the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) which can be given either to an entire class or to individually targeted students. These rating scales paired with structured observations can help school staff gather additional information about a student’s behavior

across different settings both structured and unstructured, and choose a course of intervention if needed.

Students with ADHD on the Tier 2/Tier 3 borderline often require frequent reminders of their behavioral goals. One way to continually work towards these goals with the students keeping them explicitly in mind is the Check In/Check Out system (CICO). Students in this program are taught a clear definition of behavior, with a focus on 3-4 basic skills to work on, specific to the individual. The student is then given a card or paper with these rules with a rating scale or space for teacher signature, and throughout the day the student gives the paper to a teacher to rate them on the targeted behaviors. At the end of the school day, the student can use their accrued points for a previously defined motivating reward, or save their points to work towards a bigger prize later on. Parent involvement is also tied into this program as the student would then bring home a “report card” for parents to sign (Haraway, 2012, p. 18-19). This program allows students to work towards self-monitoring of behavior, and puts the onus on them to check in and check out--teaching increased responsibility. Other strategies for students on the Tier 2/Tier 3 continuum include more intensive individualized goal setting, compliance probes and behavior observation forms. All of these are valuable tools, but teachers are cautioned: when dealing with students with ADHD and their problem behaviors, it is imperative to remember that self-monitoring is not something that happens overnight. Everything starts with data collection and establishing a baseline: “Just as the integrity of intervention implementation is critical, so is the integrity of data collection when making valid inferences and decisions” (Haraway, 2012, p. 20).

PBIS is based on the philosophy that all students can learn and exhibit appropriate behavior, and that is not limited to students of a certain age or ability level or special education status. The research shows that indeed, different populations of students may present their own unique challenges. However, teachers and administrators who are diligent about establishing solid baselines, and collecting data efficiently to use it to guide interventions and practice are able to run well-structured programs. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, teachers must remember the “P” in PBIS--positive reinforcement and rewarding both individual and group student successes instead of simply levying discipline for “bad” behavior.

Helping and Hindering Factors for PBIS Implementation

As covered earlier in this chapter, PBIS has been a trend that many schools have followed in the last decade in an effort to make behavior management more equitable and effective. Many factors combine to either assist or get in the way of the success of PBIS programs. This section will summarize scholarship on what internal and external factors can combine to make or break a school PBIS program. Strong leadership at the building level, fidelity and belief in the process, and willingness to look within at one’s unconscious biases when managing behavior were all mentioned as factors that can help a PBIS program be sustainable and successful. Hindering factors included lack of administrator or staff buy-in and inexperienced or inadequately trained teachers. Many of the strategies in the literature may seem like common sense, but reminders of best practices and the need to stay the course even when an approach seems to not work immediately are important.

Unsurprisingly, principals have a powerful influence on student achievement and teacher satisfaction/outcomes--and they play a large role in the effectiveness and sustainability of

interventions. For example, principals who are very intentional about hiring, professional development, and implementing building-wide initiatives can help create positive, non-manipulative or coercive classrooms where students feel respected and successful--a sign that PBIS is working as intended. However, administrators are cautioned to not see a few in-service trainings per year as a panacea--the most successful programs include periodic trainings with frequent administrator follow-up and coaching/positive recognition when needed (McIntosh, et al, 2016, p. 4). In the hope of identifying what factors help and hinder PBIS programs, principals note that learning from other administrators and networking/visiting with other implementing schools is helpful. They can uncover new strategies, see different ideas put into practice, and adjust their own programs to fit the unique needs of their own buildings. Once bought into the PBIS philosophy and seeing it work in other schools, administrators can craft a successful program in their own schools/settings.

Other scholarship on this subject discussed how much fidelity to PBIS principles matters in various types of settings, both general education and SPED alike. Benner, et al found that fidelity for general educators is most critical at the first of the three tiers, as most students with whom they deal do not have an elevated risk of challenging behaviors requiring more intensive or individualized interventions (p. 86). However, they went on to mention that fidelity across all three level is most critical for self-contained classrooms for students with emotional disturbances, as teachers in those settings must be extremely consistent and familiar with all three tiers and a host of different behaviors and functions. Unsurprisingly, teachers who ran their programs the way they were intended got results: Benner's study found that "teacher fidelity to

the structure and process of PBIS played a significant role in reducing problem behaviors" (p. 94).

One factor that hindered success of PBIS in both of these resources were staff that were philosophically opposed to PBIS. Obviously, if the principal or administrator is not fully on board with the philosophy of the program, it will not be implemented effectively. The same goes for teachers and other staff in the building charged with upholding and implementing PBIS strategies who believe in different behavior management philosophies. More "old-school" teachers who subscribe to a more punitive way to deter unwanted behaviors may have a problem with rewarding students for engaging in expected positive behavior (McIntosh, et al, 2016, p. 17). The same teachers may find it unacceptable to reward students who have behavioral difficulties for doing things right, as they still may have a long way to go to display appropriate behaviors regularly (Mathews, et al, 2014, p. 5). Another hindering factor is unlicensed or inexperienced teachers in the most difficult settings due to teacher shortages. Excellent professional development, solid leadership at the building level and following the program to the letter have all shown to be factors that can cause a PBIS school to succeed.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a major impetus behind the PBIS movement has been addressing inequity and disproportionality in school discipline. Decades of research have shown that students of color (and especially African American males) are excluded from school at a significantly higher rate due to disciplinary measures such as out of school and in-school suspension and office referral. Students with color who have disabilities are at an even greater risk: for example, White males with disabilities had a 9.2% suspension rate as compared to a 26.8% suspension rate for African American male students with disabilities according to national

data collected by the Office of Civil Rights in 2011-2012 (Ellwood, 2018, p. 146). However, there are ways to use discipline data in schools to reflect and identify instances of implicit bias and use PBIS to make the educational environment more inclusive and equitable for all students.

Implicit bias is a factor that definitely hinders the efficacy of PBIS programs. It can be seen in office referral and suspension data when looking at the description of the behavior for which students are being disciplined. Some behavior violations are objective, such as “smoking” or “vandalism,” whereas others require a value judgment from the teacher making the referral, like “disruption” or “defiance” (Ellwood, 2018, p. 148). Many factors determine what “disruption” is, and it can vary from teacher to teacher. Furthermore, if individuals are fatigued and need to make snap judgments, implicit assumptions and biases can come into play more often. As implicit biases are unconscious, training and education are necessary for teachers who wish to more effectively and equitably run a PBIS system. “Providing specific guidance in making unbiased decisions in these situations allows motivated people to act more equitably” (Ellwood, 2018, p. 147).

One way to combat implicit bias and help a school’s behavior management system succeed is a schoolwide focus on how educators can change the school environment and reflect upon their discipline decision making processes. Brief and infrequent professional development opportunities that focus on cultural sensitivity or diversity are inadequate, and using blanket terms like “racism” and “ableism” can decrease motivation of some teachers to do the hard equity work as they feel labeled or unfairly maligned (Ellwood, 2018, p. 147). Encouraging educators to look inward at their own practice and examine their unconscious biases without

“calling them out” can result in substantive changes to practice and in turn the entire school environment.

One area of self-reflection that can greatly improve awareness of one’s implicit biases and improve equity in behavior management involves a turning point dubbed the Vulnerable Decision Making Point (VDP). Most instances of inequitable applications of discipline for subjective behavior violations occur at the VDP. The VDP is comprised of the situation (objective vs. subjective behavior) as well as the teacher’s decision state (fatigued vs. focused) (Ellwood, 2018, p. 148). If staff can identify their own VDPs, they can cross-reference them against building wide data and adjust the precipitating circumstances accordingly. Using these metacognition skills can cause teachers on an individual level to run a behavior management system that works to keep all students in the learning environment.

Ellwood, et al (2018) continue to offer a clear, four-step process that can improve the capability of a PBIS program to succeed in increasing equity in discipline. These four steps take teacher self-awareness of personal VDPs and carry them forward. The first step is to calculate disproportionality metrics to determine the extent of the problem and establish a baseline (p. 148). If the metrics show that the school is disciplining a population of students disproportionately, then the process progresses to the second step. Step two involves analyzing the problem via determining school-wide VDPs and looking at discipline data systems through the lenses of race/ethnicity and special ed status (p. 149). What are the precipitating circumstances? Are there common threads? Step three then takes the action of modifying the school’s behavior support plan to prevent VDPs from arising (p. 150). This may involve re-training of staff on clear and consistent expectations throughout the building to minimize

instances of students being treated differently in different classrooms due to implicit biases. Finally, at step four, it is time to evaluate the plan (p. 150). Staff should review the data and recalculate disproportionality metrics to see if there is a quantitative improvement over time. It is important to revisit and reflect often (quarterly or every few months) to be sure any new tweaks aren't needed.

In summary, a review of the literature has uncovered several factors that contribute to the success and sustainability of a PBIS program. It begins with a strong principal who believes in the mission and is willing to seek out other sources of expertise and education on PBIS. Then, the administrator must provide high quality training and follow-up/coaching for teachers in their building, revisiting the tenets of the program and best practices often. Being sure that fidelity is priority number one throughout the process is also paramount. Finally, willingness to examine implicit biases and change practices accordingly is very important in preserving the PBIS mission of equity in the classroom. On the other hand, the literature also mentioned factors that can hamstring a behavior management program and cause it to not do its job. Those factors include staff who are unwilling to buy in to newer mentalities of behavior management, a lack of training and experience, and an unwillingness to reflect upon one's unconscious biases and preferences. All in all, it is a good list of background information and history for anyone investigating the question "What are the impacts of Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) on educator practices?"

The questions "how well is the program working?" or "Is the program successful?" in the context of a PBIS program are in their nature very subjective. Many schools with thriving PBIS programs will give what seem to be opinion-based answers when asked the questions, and

there is very little research that gives objective, numbers-based ways to measure how successful a behavior management program is. The PBIS website describes something called the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC), which measures fidelity to schoolwide PBIS. The TIC lists 22 items in 6 subscales, on each of which staff members self-assess on a three point scale ranging from “achieved” to “in progress” to “not yet started.” Once teams reach an 80% criterion on the TIC, they are suggested to complete 4 times per year to measure progress (Vincent & Tobin, 2012, p. 3). This is a common way for schools to measure their fidelity to the tenets of PBIS, and knowing that fidelity is so integral to the system working, this can quantify it. However, the TIC is not the only questionnaire commonly used to measure PBIS success. Vincent & Tobin (2012) also detail the Benchmarks of Quality inventory (BoQ) as another option to assess fidelity of PBIS implementation that is “valid even when ‘administered in diverse methods’” (p. 2). The BoQ is scored differently than the TIC; rather than 80% being considered the barometer for successful implementation, the BoQ’s target is 70% of total points (Vincent & Tobin, 2012, p. 3). Researchers Cohen, Kincaid and Childs (2007) noted that schools which scored 70% or better on the BoQ also had major drops in office referral rates. Like much of the research on metrics for PBIS success, Vincent & Tobin note that office referrals are “the most readily available measure of discipline” and cautioned that schools would often need more than a year of data of referrals, TIC and BoQ scores to see any meaningful reductions (p. 5).

Many in education define a successful school as one with a positive culture, where the intersection of positive values and beliefs influence positive behavior (Harte-Weiner, 2016). How does one measure the level of positivity (or toxicity) of culture? Some tangible outcomes could be a decline in the number of suspensions or office referrals, or increases in grades or test

scores. The efficiency with which data is collected at the classroom level can be a way to measure PBIS success from classroom to classroom. Apps like Hero and Class Dojo can allow teachers to set behavioral expectations specific to their classroom setting and collect data on them as the school year goes on. The amount of students hitting their specialized behavior goals and earning rewards within those programs can be a way of measuring whether your behavior management plan is working (Harte-Weiner, 2016). Schools with struggling behavior management systems can still see drops in suspensions or increases in grades. Therefore, measuring success with the intangibles (school climate, positive learning environment, teacher satisfaction) in combination with the more tangible outcomes can ensure that the improvements are related to the school's adeptness at running their PBIS program (Harte-Weiner, 2016). Frequent surveying and interviewing of staff members can help principals collect data on things like climate and teacher satisfaction. If staff and students feel good about going to school, suspensions are down, and grades are up, then by any metrics it's a successful PBIS program.

Conclusion

In examining the roots and history of the PBIS movement, criticisms thereof, consequences of punitive behavior, appearances across different settings, measurement, and helping/hindering factors, it is evident that a successful behavioral management program based in the tenets of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports requires a great deal of both flexibility and consistency and a large inventory of expert teacher tools. PBIS is not a magic bullet or a panacea for all that ails a school. It requires reflective and competent administrators and teachers who believe in its equity mission, and who understand that different groups of

students and even individuals can need a very wide continuum of strategies applied to them. It requires a variety of different assessment techniques to measure its success and an understanding that quantitative data must be paired with qualitative data over a long enough period of implementation to determine if there have been noticeable changes. Patience and trusting the process/fidelity are needed to see through a PBIS program. This review of existing literature has enriched my understanding of what PBIS is and is not, and has put me into a position to conduct my own action research. PBIS was born out of special education, so as a special education teacher in a hybrid co-taught/pull-out service delivery model, I believe I'm in a good setting to put what the literature has taught me into action.

In Chapter Three, I aim to detail the methods for a study in my secondary school setting. I will define my setting and program, demographics of students, areas of evaluation (both quantitative and qualitative). I plan on collecting data on student behaviors, detailing interventions, and integrating information from staff and students regarding perceptions of PBIS in our particular setting. At the heart of my study will be a focus upon teacher perceptions of PBIS execution in their classrooms and grade levels, and combined with quantitative data I will be able to trace threads of effectiveness and determine the impact of PBIS on educator practices.

CHAPTER THREE: Methods

Introduction

In the past few decades, Positive Behavior Interventions and Strategies (PBIS) has been the standard for schools looking to move their behavior management systems to a more equitable and positive place. As discussed in the previous two chapters, PBIS is not a prescribed curriculum and more a set of guidelines meant to be adapted to the needs of different types of academic settings. Therefore, practitioners must be aware of the makeup and needs of their particular student bodies and make decisions that are both effective for their own population of students as well as falling into the overall mission statement and aim of PBIS. The nature of PBIS's non-prescriptiveness causes some variability in how different schools implement their PBIS programs, and educators may choose to implement the system in a variety of different ways, so I set out to investigate the research question *What are the impacts of Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) on educator practices?* Through researching and reviewing literature on the topic and creating a research study in my own school setting, I hoped to find some answers of how to measure success in the area of behavior management. While much of the research I conducted in Chapter Two concluded that PBIS was a good thing, I found that PBIS did also have some detractors who have critiqued it for being too prescriptive, not prescriptive enough, and discouraging intrinsic motivation (Bruhn, et al, 2014; Samuels, et al, 2013). Additionally, other researchers found that while the initiative has noble aims, the main factors that determine its success are school staff being well trained to implement its tenets with extreme consistency and fidelity (Mathews, et al, 2014). The goal of my study is to determine

whether teachers in my setting are implementing PBIS in a faithful way, and to figure out through a variety of metrics if it is a success or not. Do the teachers think that the system employed is successful? Do the quantitative data support the qualitative observations? What are the ways in which PBIS is manifested in different classrooms? If my study can answer these questions in my setting, we can gain more insight into the answer to the overall research question: What are the impacts of Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) on educator practices?

Rationale

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two showed that PBIS can be implemented with varying degrees of success and can have many different faces depending on variables such as administration, staff, and student body. I aimed to develop ways to assess how well PBIS was working within my particular setting based on some of the measurement tools uncovered in the literature review. Chapter Two also confirmed that this study is important from an equity standpoint. The school at which my study was carried out has a large percentage of students in demographics who have been ill-served by punitive behavior measurements of the past, and I wanted to measure how well they are being helped by a more progressive behavior initiative. If my study uncovered that PBIS is being implemented well and can be measured as such, potentially we have a template that can be used elsewhere. If my study were to find out that my school is struggling with PBIS implementation, it could open the door for conversation, reflection and systemic change. All of this would improve how we serve our students and be pursuant to the overall goal of this study, and PBIS in general--equity.

Research Paradigm

I elected to focus on PBIS not only because it is an important and lauded initiative in my school setting. I work in a setting that has a large percentage of students living in poverty, students of color, and other at-risk populations who are statistically underserved by traditional behavior management models. Therefore, taking stock of what we are doing well and whether we can improve in other areas can not only enhance our day to day delivery of services to our students, but improve equity overall. Looking at this research through a social/racial justice and equity lens will allow the study results to give us as educators a clear path forward to providing a more inclusive school for the students who need it most. While I have my theories about how students and staff will react and respond to elements of the study, I am not tethered to the idea of proving a particular point or confirming a hypothesis. Rather, I will follow the data the study generates and analyze it to determine what ways PBIS has impacted and changed educator practices, and which ways seem to be the most successful.

Choice of Method

I initially chose a mixed research method to conduct my research; however, I ended up settling on the choice of qualitative research after considering the realities of my study group and building (more on this in the “Methods” section). Mills (2014) defines qualitative research as “narrative and descriptive approaches to examine the research question and problem through the perspective of the participants.” I adopted this approach as I planned to give both students and teachers surveys which required them to answer demographic questions, as well as opinion-based ratings and short answer questions. Since the research question *What are the*

impacts of Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) on educator practices? lends itself more to things like surveys, questionnaires, and observations rather than quantitative measures (other than tracking office referrals and suspension data), I thought that the qualitative methodology was important to lead with. However, I also wanted to back up qualitative, survey-type data with some hard numbers, so I also chose to consider some quantitative measures to see if they support the qualitative data. Sometimes record keeping and data collection at the building level can often be misleading. For example, some teams in the younger grades may rely heavily on Fix-It Plans, a document meant to track, describe, and help process student behavior, to give students when they need a time-out from class (which are easily tracked and noted). However, high school teams may not use this method for their particular vision of PBIS and use pep talks and phone calls home as interventions, which may be documented with varying levels of consistency. In the end, the variability of data collection and methods across grade levels caused me to decline to focus on quantitative behavioral data and stay focused on the qualitative feedback from the survey. That said, it was still a valuable exercise to include both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to see if perception of success of the grade level PBIS program is consistent with what the numbers say.

Setting

The study was conducted in an urban, upper midwest public school district. The school in which the study was undertaken ("Lincoln Secondary", a pseudonym) is a secondary school serving students in grades 6-12. The total enrollment as of October 2018 was just over 2,000 students. 55.9% of students were identified as Asian American, followed by 24% Black or African American. Hispanic and Latinx students made up 11.8% of the student body, and White

students accounted for 4.7% of all students. 3% of students were identified as Multi-Racial, and 0.6% of students were identified as American Indian. 87% of students at the school, which receives Title I funding, qualify for free and reduced lunch. 36% of students are English Language Learners, and 14% are identified as students receiving Special Education services.

As of 2018, Lincoln was ranked 348th out of 494 high schools in the state (School Digger, 2018). The high population of students in the ELL program as well as the high percentage of students living in poverty correlates to a lower percentage of proficient scores on state standardized tests, as students in each of these groups need to navigate different challenges outside of school, in addition to taking grade level assessments in a language they are still learning or understand at a level below their age. However, in some of the upper grades of the school (10th and 11th grade), data from School Digger shows that students at the school at which the study is conducted catch up to, and eventually overtake, the district average percentage of proficient scores on the major state assessment given each April (2018). Both school and district percentages of proficient test-takers are below the state average. In general, data tends to show students making academic growth throughout their career at Lincoln, even though they still remain below the state average.

The administrative structure at Lincoln has a single principal in charge of both the middle and high school grades. Each grade has a designated assistant principal assigned to it, with some assistant principals taking on two grade levels that may have lower enrollment. Middle school grades tend to have one AP per grade due to higher enrollment and higher need for behavioral interventions. APs assigned to the higher grades generally will be responsible for 2-3 grade levels depending on enrollment. All told, there are 4 assistant principals who cover 7 grade

levels. In addition to APs, the building has several behavior intervention specialists, who are embedded in each grade's "house" and interdisciplinary team. Each grade has one behavior specialist. These staff members may be utilized to team up with classroom teachers to help come up with and support Tier 2 and Tier 3 PBIS interventions, or just to be a sympathetic ear to a struggling student. The goal of the behavioral specialists is to re-integrate students into class first and foremost, as they function as an additional stop before an office referral.

The staff at Lincoln is largely white and largely female. There is a large amount of staff turnover in the middle school grades, and a number of teachers, especially in special education, on alternative licenses or variances. Staff in the upper grades tends to be more stable; for instance, the entire grade 9A team (about 10 teachers across all disciplines) only experienced one change (different Reading teacher) from 2017 to 2018. The administrative staff is an even split of male/female, and 66% White. The behavioral specialist staff are 100% African American, and nearly 100% male.

Participants

There were several groups of staff members surveyed at Lincoln for this study. Teachers were selected from a variety of different grade levels, both from middle school and high school. Groups were selected from grade levels 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 so as to give insight into both middle school and high school PBIS programs, which can vary a great deal in appearance and execution. There was a heavier weighting of ninth grade teacher responses due to my proximity to the team and number of staff who chose to be included in the survey. It also is worth noting that the overwhelming majority of the ninth grade teachers surveyed were white and male, as the ninth

grade staff teams are very demographically different from the building-wide staff makeup. The overall group of school staff surveyed had an even 50/50 split between men and women.

Methods

After consideration of a mixed methods approach of both qualitative and quantitative, consisting of surveys and interviews for this study as well as reviews of quantitative data such as office referrals, suspensions and dismissals across each grade level team, I settled on a qualitative approach. After investigating the possibility of collecting quantitative data of suspensions, dismissals and office referrals, I realized the variability of expectations throughout the building would not contribute to an “apples to apples” comparison of data across different grade levels. Groups of school staff were given an online survey consisting of multiple choice as well as short answer questions. Given that the school district Lincoln is a part of has a 1:1 technology initiative with all students and staff having access to personal, district-issued iPads, it made a lot of sense to collect this data electronically and have the groups fill out the surveys electronically.

On the form, responders were asked to first identify themselves via years of experience, race, gender, and content area/job, so that trends in responses along age, racial or gender lines could be identified. Then, they were presented with a series of statements about PBIS. Example statements: “Students have become more self-directed in managing their behavior” or “My administration communicates expectations of PBIS effectively to staff,” or “my students are motivated by rewards for good behavior.” Survey takers were asked to respond to these statements with one of five choices ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” (Likert scale). These questions were meant to establish whether each staff group had an opinion

of whether the school's PBIS framework was successful at their grade level iteration. Beyond the multiple choice questions, survey takers then had to respond to a series of short answer questions such as "What do teachers do well when responding to student behaviors?" and "What do you think teachers could do better when managing student behaviors?" The aim of the short answer questions was to gather more data that offered more individual voice and specificity than simple multiple choice survey questions. This allowed staff members to identify exactly what they thought was successful or unsuccessful, with an anonymous response so they could speak candidly and without any reservations.

All statements were phrased positively so responses across the spectrum would be easy to sort. More of the questions focused opinions on things like data collection and administrative support/coaching surrounding PBIS, so as a researcher one would be able to evaluate whether staff felt measurement of success was adequate. This continued into the short answer questions, as survey responders were asked things like "what tools or techniques do you use to track behaviors?" and finally, point-blank, the (paraphrased) research question of this study: "In what ways has your practice changed as a result of PBIS?" Some questions were adapted from the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC), which was identified in Chapter Two as a tool to be given to educators quarterly to assess and measure proficiency on PBIS implementation.

After the surveys were completed, individual volunteers were selected from each group to sit down for more in-depth interviews. This was a way to get more information than could be conveyed in a multiple choice or short answer question, as well as offer a mode of communication (talking) that was easier than writing, and conveying thoughts in a clearer, more

thorough and “realer” way. Once again, names of interviewees were kept confidential from other staff members.

Study Approval

As a researcher, it is imperative to follow ethical guidelines. I decided upon/designed the research instruments and secured approval from my capstone team of advisers after these three chapters were complete. Then the capstone was submitted for IRB approval. After securing permission from the board at Hamline University as well as the principal of the school in the study, forms detailing the nature of the study, research protocols, description of how data will be used, and description of confidentiality measures were shared with teachers prior to participation in the survey. Teachers also gave their consent via a signed form.

Summary

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Strategies have been in effect nationally for over two decades, and with it, educators have become increasingly focused on how to give all students an equitable shot at getting what they need educationally. The non-prescriptive nature of PBIS--more a guiding set of principles than a curriculum--allows for much innovation, and yes, human error. Therefore, educators must be endlessly reflective and diligent at checking to make sure they are seeing the big picture of PBIS in their day-to-day doings. In this mixed methods study, I hope to gather data on staff opinions and attitudes on whether Lincoln’s various iterations of PBIS are effective, and examining quantitative data to see how well staff perceptions line up with suspension and dismissal numbers. Beyond that, we could have a template for improved equity in behavior management in other school settings, or the data

required to re-evaluate our own system and improve our PBIS implementation in our own school.

CHAPTER FOUR: Results

Overview

The goal of this study was to collect qualitative data around implementation of PBIS among secondary educators and analyze for trends. The research question “*How has PBIS impacted educator practices?*” was the main focus of the study, but members of the focus group were also asked about how they see PBIS being implemented in their specific settings. Educators were also encouraged to share their general opinions/perceptions about PBIS both in theory and in practice. This chapter will present the qualitative data collected from the group and make conclusions on how PBIS has impacted educator practices. Additionally, this chapter will explore how PBIS could be modified in the secondary school setting to maximize positive impact on students learning pro-social behaviors, moving students from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, and boosting academic achievement of students in at-risk groups.

Review of Methods and Study Demographics

Chapter Three explained the methods that I chose to use for investigation of the research question “*How has PBIS impacted educator practices?*” A qualitative approach was used to answer this question. Study participants were given an online survey consisting of 17 statements about PBIS asking them to rate on a Likert scale their feelings about the statements ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Following this portion of the survey, participants answered

10 short answer questions about PBIS in a “big-picture” sense as well as specifically its implementation in their part of the building and the school overall.

The study was conducted at a large urban Midwestern secondary school (grades 6-12). The participants were 40 educators (teachers, EAs, behavioral specialists) ranging from grades 6 through 12 across all content areas, from both general education and special education. It was a very experienced group of educators. 20% reported working in education for 6-10 years, 30% had been educators for 11-15 years, and 50% had been in the profession for at least 16 years (37.5% of that number were educators with over 20 years experience).

Broken down by role in the building, a large percentage of survey respondents were 9th grade teachers (35%). 30% of respondents taught grades 6-8. The remaining 35% of respondents were upper high school educators (grades 10, 11, 12) or held positions which worked with a variety of grade levels (9-12).

Racially, the group was largely Caucasian (85%). The remaining 15% was comprised thusly: 5% reported as multi-racial, 5% African-American, and 5% reported as Asian American. The gender demographics were slightly more balanced: Split by gender, the responses broke down to 57.5% male, 37.5% female, 2.5% prefer not to say, and 2.5% non-binary. By role in the building, the percentages broke down to Special Education 25%, Math 20%, English Language Arts 15%, Social Studies 10%, Science 10%, Educational Assistant/Support Staff 5%, Related Service Provider 5%, Electives 5%, English Language Learning 5%.

After giving demographic information, study participants were asked to answer the aforementioned Likert scale statements. Results have been sorted and analyzed based on the scope of the statement: the initial statements were about the overall “big picture” concept of

PBIS, while the rest dealt with attitudes and feelings about PBIS implementation specifically from a building-wide or interdisciplinary team-wide perspective (“Localized” statements).

“Big Picture” statements about PBIS (Likert scale results):

Overall, the group surveyed at Lincoln had positive opinions of PBIS as an idea or concept. The statement “PBIS is an effective framework for managing student behavior” brought 31 positive (strongly agree or somewhat agree) responses to 5 neutral and 4 negative responses. Percentage wise, this means 77.5% of staff surveyed have positive thoughts about PBIS as an institution. However, it is worth noting that of the 31 positive responses, only 5 had said “strongly agree” while 26 were in the “somewhat agree” camp. This suggests that there is broad support for PBIS as an idea or concept among Lincoln staff, but that there are some questions or misgivings about its mission or implementation, which I hoped would be addressed in the short answer responses later in the survey. The remaining “big picture” questions about PBIS broke down as follows:

“I believe in the mission of PBIS” gathered 30 positive, 6 neutral, 4 negative responses. 75% positive was a strong response, and I was interested to note that 40% of responses to this statement were “strongly agree”—the highest of any statement on the survey. “PBIS works for a majority of students when properly implemented” brought in 29 positive, 8 neutral, and 3 negative responses, for an overall 72.5% positive response rate (30% of respondents “strongly agreed”). The responses to these two statements painted a picture of a group of educators who

strongly believe in PBIS as a concept or ethos which is effective, at least given the caveat that it is properly implemented (more on those opinions in a more localized and immediate sense later).

“PBIS is an effective way to promote equity in the classroom” gathered 21 positive, 11 neutral, and 8 negative responses. Only 3 of the 21 positives marked “strongly agree” and the total positive percentage was just over 50%, making it the least popular big-picture statement. This was the first inkling of a critique of PBIS, after an overwhelmingly positive response initially, that I noticed when going through the data from the first four Likert scale statements. I kept a note of this to revisit later when analyzing the short answer data, to see if some of the free response answers would go into any further detail about how PBIS could be more equitable. However, at least initially from these responses, it seemed that PBIS has impacted educator practice positively overall from a larger perspective.

Localized Likert Scale Data Analysis

After analyzing the more generalized statements about PBIS nationally and conceptually, it was time to look at responses to statements that dealt explicitly with Lincoln’s specific iteration and vision for PBIS implementation. As noted earlier in this capstone, PBIS is a very non-prescriptive ideology that can appear differently in various settings, and it is worth looking into the opinions of staff in charge of implementing one version of PBIS within this particular building. Also noted in Chapter Two, administrative support and buy-in are crucial to the success and sustainability of a PBIS program, so several statements dealt with administrative leadership in communicating PBIS implementation expectations to staff members as well.

The PBIS statements about staff attitudes at Lincoln can be broken down into building-wide and team-wide categories. The building-wide data showed somewhat divided

opinions on administrative leadership and guidance regarding PBIS. The first statement about administration and PBIS was simply “My administrators believe in the mission of PBIS.” Only 50% of respondents (20 staff members) answered either “strongly agree” (7 responses) or “somewhat agree” (13 responses). This was a departure from the strong majorities of positive responses from staff about their own feelings on PBIS earlier on in the survey. 12 respondents answered neutrally and 8 negatively. Staff attitudes seem divided on whether leadership is following PBIS’s tenets or fully believe in PBIS’s mission.

A pair of questions regarding staff professional development and leadership from administration had similar responses. “My school offers an appropriate amount of professional development on equity and cultural literacy” brought back 15 positive responses (3 strongly agree/12 somewhat agree), a percentage of 37.5. There were nearly the same amount of Neutral responses with 14, and there was a 27.5% Negative response rate (11 responses). “My school offers an appropriate amount of coaching on common expectations and behavior management” only had 7 positive responses (1 strongly agree/6 somewhat agree)—17.5%. A surprising 23 negative responses (57.5%) indicate that a majority of staff surveyed feel that administrative vision for PBIS and communication is insufficient and/or ineffective.

One final schoolwide statement “Student behavior is handled fairly at the building wide level” was met with 0 “strongly agree” responses. 11 “somewhat agree” responses were recorded, along with 11 “neutrals”. 18 negative responses were recorded, for a 45% overall negative reaction to the statement.

Lincoln is a very physically large school with 7 grade levels and over 2,000 students, so on some level it is not a surprise that staff can feel disconnected from the main office or on an

island from administrative guidance, observation or coaching. In an effort to allow grade level teams to define and structure PBIS to their own age group and population, each grade level staff team meets as an interdisciplinary group to set common expectations, discuss students, and build team/grade identity within their area of the building as described in Chapter 3. While PBIS leadership is ideally expected to trickle down from principals and assistant principals, the IDTs are also tasked with tweaking PBIS to more specific iterations that work best for their grade level. Several statements dealt specifically with the functionality of IDTs as they relate to planning around PBIS elements. While the building-wide responses would indicate a school not functioning effectively to train and educate their staff on PBIS, the responses to IDT functionality seemed to be more positive.

The first statement in this group was “My Interdisciplinary team discusses student behavior and proactively plans to manage student behavior.” Staff responses to this came back strongly positive, as 25 of the 40 (62.5%) answered strongly or somewhat agree. Only 5 responses were negative (12.5%). Similarly positive were responses to the statement “My team has systems in place to acknowledge and reward following expectations.” 25 survey participants (again, 62.5%) responded positively to this statement. However, more participants (9, 22.5%) responded negatively than did to the prior statement. It sounds as if a majority of teams are doing a good job of talking about behavior and strategizing to manage behavior during their meetings. One can also interpret that teams are creating systems for recognition or rewarding of positive behaviors, but that Lincoln is not at 100% implementation across all grade levels.

Effective teams working within a PBIS program need to also have a clearly defined, reasonable consequence structure for undesirable behaviors that are not remedied by positive

interventions. Another statement presented to the study says “My team has clearly defined and consistent consequences for undesirable behaviors in place.” Participants largely believed that their interdisciplinary teams were doing a good job with developing their own hierarchies and tiers of consequences, with again 62.5% of respondents replying positively. 22.5% of participants had negative responses to this statement. This is an encouraging sign that educators feel good about the behavior management systems they’ve been tasked with developing; in a large building such as Lincoln where exclusionary discipline is thought of as a last resort, grade level teams must be resourceful in developing and agreeing upon norms of behavior and responses to them. The consistency in numbers of positive responses over the last three statements show that a majority of teams are discussing and strategizing how to reward, deter or minimize certain behaviors as a group.

There were 2 more IDT-centric statements in the survey. “My team has at least one member proficient in developing behavioral plans for students needing Tier 3 supports” was one of them. Slightly less than 50% of respondents (19/40) said they agreed with this statement. Over 25% (11/40) disagreed. This is where criticisms of how interdisciplinary teams function under the tenets of PBIS began to be evident. Each IDT has an assigned social worker, at least one special education case manager, and grade level behavioral specialist. Therefore, in theory, every team has at least one member who is an expert in developing plans for those students who consistently display the most challenging behaviors. A possible reason for the lukewarm positive response could be staffing-related. While each team has an assigned social worker, that social worker is assigned to more than one IDT. They often cannot make every meeting, or are pulled away by other responsibilities such as students in crisis. The same can be said for behavioral

specialists pulled between 2 interdisciplinary teams, or special education case managers who need to schedule IEP meetings or deal with student concerns that may arise during these times.

Another area for improvement within interdisciplinary teams is that of data collection. The statement “I am satisfied with how my team collects data on behaviors” returned only 13 positive responses (32.5%), while 14 respondents answered negatively (35%). A possible reason for this is data being collected anecdotally and discussed while teams move away from documentation such as fix-it plans or referrals. Many behavioral instances are handled within the tiers of PBIS but not documented. For example, a teacher may have a conference or talk with a misbehaving student and be able to redirect the behavior and get them back into the class, but instead of pausing to document the teacher goes back to the lesson. The second statement about data collection was “Discipline data is gathered and analyzed at least quarterly with my team.” 25% of respondents had an agreeable view of this statement, while 57.5% disagreed with it. As indicated from the prior statement, if teams are not collecting data in a satisfactory way, obviously it is hard to go back and review that data.

Nationally, building-wide, and team-wide, staff displayed a varying array of opinions from the study group. To finish up, educators were asked to evaluate PBIS implementation in a more focused, controllable arena: their own classroom. As outlined earlier in this capstone, elements of a successful PBIS program include 3-5 positive expectations. “My students can name 3-5 expectations for behavior in my classroom” brought back an overwhelmingly positive reply. 31/40 (77.5%) agreed with this statement, with only 2 disagreeing (5%). Educators at Lincoln feel confident about establishing and teaching norms to their students. While this study group had criticisms of functionality of their teams and administrative communication, it seems

that overall they believed in the mission and message of PBIS and felt confident in their individual abilities to build positive classroom culture.

One final statement in the survey had to do with a critique of PBIS outlined earlier in this capstone, that PBIS tends to over-incentivize students with tangible or extrinsic rewards and discourages more intrinsic, self-directed behavior management. “PBIS has helped students become more self-directed in managing their behavior” brought back fewer positive “agree” responses (11/40, 27.5%) than negative “disagree” responses (12/40, 30%). This indicates lukewarm support for PBIS as a way to teach students to learn replacement behaviors and self-management skills among Lincoln staff, with slightly more actively disagreeing with the statement than agreeing and nearly half feeling “neutral” about this sentiment.

Short Answer Questions

After the Likert scale statements, staff members participating in the survey were given ten short answer questions. These questions were presented as a way for survey participants to elaborate upon answers they gave in the first portion of the study with more specificity. This allowed participants to share criticisms, concerns, and grade-/setting-/ classroom-specific strategies and musings about PBIS. Throughout these questions, several common threads and trends arose. I’ve summarized each question while isolating certain responses and analyzing what it means for PBIS in our school and others.

Critiques of PBIS

Much of the scholarship critical of PBIS discussed in Chapter 2 cited issues with top-down communication from school leadership of expectations and consistency of implementation of the three-tiered system. Also mentioned were the concerns of PBIS leaning

too heavily on material and extrinsic rewarding of positive behaviors, building student habits of following expectations only for the payout rather than genuinely learning self-management skills. Finally, programs that don't implement data collection measures on behaviors with consistency and fidelity have been criticized as ineffective. Lincoln staff in the study, while having a generally positive outlook on PBIS, largely echoed some of these same concerns.

Critiques of leadership and training on PBIS were a common thread of staff asked to share. "We need more training and schoolwide implementation," "I haven't had enough training on it," "real support from admin has failed to materialize," "not implemented or coached in my grade," "only explicitly trained for middle school staff, so only half the building is following the system, and "There is not enough buy in from all levels; everyone from the cafeteria workers to the head principal need to trained and believe in the benefits of PBIS" are a sampling of responses that indicate that Lincoln has room for improvement with their staff training and professional development for educators. Other respondents voiced concerns with the staffing needed to properly implement a three-tiered system. "Not enough behavioral staff to support general and special education staff" was an echoed sentiment from several survey participants.

Consistency in delivery of a PBIS system in such a large building also was a critique. "Building does not use PBIS universally," "varies from grade to grade and year to year," and "expectations can be a moving target" show the challenges that educators face in implementing the system, and that students face in understanding what is acceptable and what is not while they

move through the school from year to year and even period to period. “Expectations vary from room to room and that leads to frustration at times to people dealing with behavior.”

Positive Reinforcement

Next, staff members were asked to share their answers to the question “What types of positive reinforcement do you use for students at the Tier 2 and 3 levels?” Knowing what types of individualized strategies educators use is a step in answering the research question of “how has PBIS impacted educator practices?” and providing ideas and an actionable way forward for other educators seeking to improve their implementation. Staff at Lincoln shared a variety of positive reinforcers both extrinsic and intrinsic.

Extrinsic motivation is often an integral part of motivating reluctant or struggling students, and can help in the early stages of PBIS implementation before students are ready to learn more self-directed behavior management skills. A very common form of this are physical or food items, especially among younger students. Snacks, candy, pencils, tickets that can add up to larger items at a classroom store were reported as effective positive reinforcers by Lincoln staff members completing the survey. Physical rewards seemed to be used more commonly among middle school (grades 6-8) teachers and among teachers working in specialized programs (setting 3 special education). Among high school teachers, the most common type of positive reinforcement seemed to be privilege or free time-based. Opportunities for extra hall passes, gym or video game time, or other student interest-driven activities were reported by high school teachers as being the most effective. Finally, many respondents to the survey cited relationship-based motivation. For many students, verbal acknowledgement and praise is effective. For others requiring more motivation, lunch with a preferred staff member or even

opportunities to talk to a favorite staff member are common. Finally and perhaps most prevalently, communication like phone calls and emails home to parents were cited as common strategies to reward positive student behavior. Overall, Lincoln staff shared a wide variety of motivational techniques to recognize positive behavior, while not being overly complicated. While there were a variety of approaches used across the grade levels, I noticed that at the root of each were teachers forming relationships with students and allowing them to dictate their own rewards as they set off on a path to greater self-management.

PBIS and Fostering Classroom Culture

Survey participants were asked to share ways in which they foster positive classroom culture through PBIS. I was interested in learning about the strategies educators try to build positive culture in their rooms, and the reasoning behind them. Many staff mentioned that they use a building-wide incentive of Gold Cards (in which students witnessed to be following the building-wide positive behavioral expectations are given “gold tickets” that go into a weekly raffle for prizes at lunch). While it was encouraging to see staff members following through on a top-down PBIS initiative with fidelity, it was also interesting to see the ways in which educators adapted their own practices and environments in attempts to make their classrooms safe and welcoming spaces for all students and build positive relationships. “Clear expectations and rewarding of positive behaviors,” and “focusing on the good first, and often,” show a focus on consistency and individual behavior. One educator said they have utilized “entire class prizes/rewards” to tie positive behavior to the good of community, and create a sense of belonging and accomplishment. Overall, most of these responses were very similar to the

previous question about positive reinforcement, and echoed more strategies previously shared from that section.

Behavioral Expectations

Despite critiques about consistency of administrative training and oversight of PBIS, Lincoln staff were overwhelmingly consistent when asked to list 3-5 positive behavioral expectations in their classrooms. A vast majority of these responses cited the prescribed message posted in hallways, classrooms, cafeteria, gym, etc. of “Respectful, Responsible, Ready to Learn” or some variation thereof. This shows that messaging on building-wide expectations has been successful.

However, other educators shared expectations unique to their classrooms. In the Likert scale responses, a large majority of respondents said that their students could name the 3-5 expectations in their classrooms. Most of the classroom-specific responses had to do with attendance, preparedness and positive study habits/engagement. Some expectations were tailored specifically to the characteristics and/or struggles of the students in particular classrooms. For example, middle school educators included “hands to yourself” and “raise your hand” as they may have younger, more energetic or less disciplined students than the 11th grade teacher who shared the expectation of “be on task, be engaged, work together as a group.” Some respondents were more specific than others. While “avoid disrupting others” can mean the same thing as “take a direct route to the pencil sharpener and a direct route back,” the difference and specificity in language may illustrate the needs of students in different classes who are at different levels of maturity of understanding. One educator may focus on baseline level behavioral/conduct expectations as their students may not be as advanced as another class, whose teacher may

choose to set more rigorous, academically focused guidelines. However, “Respectful/Responsible/Ready To Learn” does look different across settings and age groups, and survey respondents seemed comfortable creating sets of expectations that work for their students specifically while remaining under that umbrella.

Moving from Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivation

As mentioned earlier, intrinsic motivation does not come easily to all students. Therefore, there is room in PBIS for positive extrinsic motivation for students who need it as they develop more self-directed behavior. Lincoln staff shared a variety of strategies they use to wean students off the extrinsic motivators that some students need to begin learning positive replacement behaviors within a PBIS system. Making this move can overcome a common PBIS critique as well as set students up for more self-direction and success as well as provide educators with meaningful, positive change to their practices in teaching students new behavior and self-management.

For many respondents, gradual tapering off or limiting of material incentives over time was a common strategy. Several educators mentioned starting off the year with frequent rewards, and then gradually spacing out the intervals of time they are given. “I slowly stop giving out candy as often, until gradually I’m not using it at all” was a variation of this response. “As I see more consistent positive behavior I will stop giving extrinsic motivation and decrease the frequency” echoed this sentiment as well. In some settings, such as small group/pull-out/specialized service provider, motivating students can appear differently. One

educator who works in a small group setting with students who have lower academic skills tries relationship and rapport building first and foremost. If the students don't buy in to behavioral expectations, they move to extrinsic rewards in the moment. For students who still require extrinsic motivation but need to think more long-term, point systems working towards a longer-term reward can be another step towards intrinsic motivation and self-management.

The most common strategy shared by Lincoln staff to move students away from extrinsic motivation was getting students to "buy in" to their own education and take ownership of school as a place where they have control, rather than passively experience. One common way to increase buy in was encouraging students think about their futures and longer-term goals linking those goals to their ability to self-manage and hold themselves to expectations independently. Several educators mentioned talking to their students about college, GPA, credits, graduating, etc. in an effort to motivate them to have a longer scope in mind when choosing how to function in school than from moment to moment and for a short-lived material prize. One teacher said they have discussions with students about what is important to them, and ties in how school and behavior can help them accomplish what they want to do. Essentially, students need a reason to care about school and see the benefits of it. One final strategy shared in the survey talked about giving students voice and choice and using culturally responsive teaching strategies. If students feel in control and feel seen and represented, they are more likely to buy into their educational experience and learn to manage themselves and get to a place where they are more intrinsically motivated.

Expectation Communication

As a way to expand upon the Likert scale results of statements about administrative support and communication/training on PBIS, survey participants were asked to respond to the statement “Do you feel that expectations of how to manage behavior are clearly communicated?” A decent number (12) of respondents answered “no” with little to no further explanation. Other educators had more nuanced responses: a common thread was that administration does not communicate school-wide behavioral expectations and norms well, but that staff in their individual grade level teams do a good job of developing and following through on common expectations for their specific area of the building. “There is no building-wide standard for behavior—we have expectations in our team that we maintain.” “Our team has a clear vision of behavior management norms within our area, but feel it varies greatly depending on the administrator or grade level.” Seven respondents explicitly referenced their interdisciplinary team as setting strong and consistent expectations for their specific grade level. With what we know about PBIS as a non-prescriptive ideology which can vary from setting to setting, perhaps administration allowing teams the leeway within a loose building-wide structure to do what’s best for their students and their behavioral needs is PBIS-friendly in and of itself.

Other staff shared that they thought that administration “mostly” or “inconsistently” communicated a building-wide vision for PBIS implementation. Several focused on the follow-through of administration as being an area for growth. “I think that expectations are clearly communicated at the school level. However, holding students to these expectations at the building level is not always managed consistently.” Another survey respondent theorized a reason for the inconsistencies: “I feel that a structure is in place and we have a very talented behavioral management team to deal with behavior. As a [special education] department, I feel

we have struggled mostly due to the [special education] admin position being a temporary position (intern).” Certainly a revolving door of a new, inexperienced administrator every year for students in special education could make for an inconsistent message from year to year and even month to month, as they continue to learn on the job.

Behavior Tracking Tools and Techniques

One of the areas which gathered the most negative responses in the Likert scale portion of the survey was that of data collection and documentation. Many survey respondents were unsatisfied with data collection at the team and building wide level. One common quantitative way to track behavior is through office referrals and suspension/dismissal data. Tracking behavior with both of these measures are not productive at Lincoln, as office referrals are not documented and suspension data can be misleading (some student suspensions are not logged). Collecting data at the classroom and team level, however, can be helpful for identifying students whose behaviors are rising to Tier 3 and therefore need creative and individualized programming to help teach positive replacement behaviors. I asked staff at Lincoln to share what tools or techniques they use to track behaviors in their day to day jobs. There were mixed responses, from staff who shared they don’t track behaviors at all, to old-fashioned pen and paper anecdotal records and logs, to interdisciplinary team-wide Google Docs that allow all teachers to log and edit student behaviors.

Of the 40 educators surveyed, six responded that they do not use any formal behavior tracking system. One said they no longer tracked behavior because “to my knowledge, the data

was never used.” Another said “there are no building required ones, so none.” Finally, one respondent said that they fill out monitor slips that have been provided to students with tier 2 and 3 behaviors, but that they do not track that info (special education teacher or behavior specialist does). There seemed to be a narrative of helplessness among some of the responses like this. Some educators seemed to be burnt out on collecting data that did not amount to measurable change so they gave up. Others without a formal behavioral tracking system still seemed to be trying. Keeping track of phone calls and emails home to parents of at-risk students with frequent behavioral incidents, while informal, was mentioned by several educators as a way to get a sense of which students need more support within the PBIS tier system. Other educators in the survey documented emails to support staff for the same reason.

The most organized behavior tracking systems at Lincoln seem to exist at the Interdisciplinary Team level. 15 respondents mentioned some sort of Google Form or spreadsheet used by their interdisciplinary team. As all teachers on each grade level team have access to the spreadsheet, student behaviors in different settings can be tracked and quantified and the team can develop supports for the student accordingly. The prevalence of shared documentation allows staff to communicate and identify students who need Tier 3 attention through objective data. Additionally, several staff members mentioned that they keep personal documents on student behaviors. Data collection was not an area of strength according to Lincoln survey participants; however, it seems that individuals and teams do employ strategies to quantify and log behaviors to help identify students who are in need of greater support from the second and third tiers of PBIS.

Next Steps for Challenging Behavior

Once a student reaches the end of the second tier of PBIS, what do staff at Lincoln do? I asked survey participants “When a behavioral management technique is not working, what are your next steps?” in an effort to find out. Lincoln staff identified a number of different resources and strategies they utilize.

Unsurprisingly, in such a team-based approach at such a large school, communication is paramount. “Ask for support from behavioral specialist,” “Ask other teachers for ideas,” “Involve case managers, behavioral specialists, paraprofessionals to help,” “Ask colleagues how they handle a student’s behavior, then behavioral specialist” are only a few of the responses that showed how staff are able to work together and use each others’ experiences as resources to help manage student behaviors. Communication with home was also a frequently cited strategy. Staff are clearly comfortable reaching out to others for help; however, others looked within. “Trying to figure out if I can re-teach/I look to see if I am causing the behavior,” “I assess why I think it didn’t work and then choose an alternative,” and “Step back and reflect/is there another approach?” are examples of staff showing flexibility and introspection, being willing to self-reflect and modify their practices.

Success of the System

Success of a behavioral management system can be difficult to define, as referenced in Chapters 1 and 2. I hoped to clarify this among Lincoln staff by asking “How do you measure whether your behavioral management system is successful?” There were a variety of responses, ranging from data-driven to more feel-based. One educator mentioned that they survey students to see if they feel welcomed and safe in class throughout the year, and uses that for the basis of

analyzing effectiveness of their system, while another said “nothing concrete, just how well the class is flowing.”

One trend was educators tying engagement and academic achievement in with behaviors. “Students are on task and engaged. They look and sound happy when they are learning,” and “Students’ academic performance increases and incidents decrease” in various forms were common sentiments. “I measure my classroom culture by the amount of students turning in work vs. the amount of students I need to send out of class” further spells out the connection educators draw between academics and behavior. Many believe that if their behavioral management is successful, then student grades will rise across the board.

Some teachers pointed to data that could inform them of the success of their behavioral management: “monitor percentage of time on task to see improvement, track referrals to behavioral specialist and interventions.” Another said they would declare their behavior management a success “based on the number of times assistance is required from a behavior specialist.”

Community and classroom culture can be hard to define, but educators pointed to classrooms with positive culture and sense of community as being a success. “I know it when I see it. If students are engaging and being helpful to each other it is a clear success” was the response of one teacher which highlights an unscientific but observable barometer for effectiveness of managing behavior. “I look at the climate and learning for all students in the classroom” and “Kids are respectful to the class and work together” are more responses pointing to classroom climate and feel being the measuring stick for success of behavior management. Developing positive classroom culture starts on day one and requires commitment throughout the

school year, and requires consistent yet reflective practice, which leads us to the final question of the survey.

Impact of PBIS on Educator Practice

For the final question of the study, I asked a rephrased version of my research question: “How has PBIS impacted your practice as an educator?” While many of the preceding questions sought answers that would provide insights into this question, asking it point blank could allow educators to distill their thoughts on it into their purest form. While the responses were mixed (impacting educators in positive or negative ways, or not at all), a majority of Lincoln staff shared a wide variety of ways that PBIS has changed their practice for the better. Overall, the initiative itself (despite some criticism of its implementation) can be summed up in a staff member’s response to the research question: “I admire the philosophy and am happy to support it in my own practices.”

PBIS has helped staff focus on setting up relationships and class culture before academics. One survey participant said it has “shown me the importance of having a strong foundation in my classroom built on positive relationships and a positive classroom community.” With educators held to rigorous standards and being required to cover large amounts of academic material, it can be easy to rush this process and try to dive right into content, but in the long run taking the time to build that positive community will help everything run more smoothly: “PBIS reminds me that relationships and engaging activities make negative behaviors less likely to arise.” Another survey respondent simply said “I have become more patient and understanding.

Some educators are implementing PBIS without knowing it. “It has always been a part of how I teach, so it’s difficult to assess what impact it has had.” PBIS has been around for longer

than many survey participants have been in the education profession, so it has been an integral part of many educators' practices from the beginning and can be hard to say how their practices would be different without it. Some staff shared in the survey that they have become more collaborative with both administration and colleagues in the absence of explicit training on PBIS. "It helps to have a collaborative effort to improve behavior and define clear expectations." "I've learned from experience and asking colleagues for support.....I recall very little to no training on PBIS." Even educators who believe they haven't been impacted by PBIS mentioned that it has strengthened their collaborative planning within teams: "I am not sure that PBIS alone has impacted my practice other than given a structure or system to work as a team in a more effective manner."

Some staff believe that PBIS has negatively impacted the educational practice of themselves or others. Different understandings and philosophies, as well as criticisms of Lincoln's eliminating or softening of deterrent consequences led the way among negative responses. One educator pointed out that much of their collaborative time in meetings are taken up with misunderstandings or disagreements on how the tier system should be implemented at their level: "[It's a] struggle to get all staff on the same page regarding how Tiers 2 and 3 should work." One middle school teacher pointed out that PBIS has changed educator practice to be less punitive, but that in doing away with consistent bottom line consequences, the culture of the school and staff has suffered: "I do not see it being implemented well at the younger levels where it is needed more. There don't seem to be any real consequences, thus the overall atmosphere of the school is declining." A handful of others said that PBIS has not impacted their practice at all, either due to insufficient training or because they don't believe in it. "PBIS creates

frustration for me,” “I can’t answer this because it’s unclear to me what is included in PBIS,” and “It has reinforced my belief that unless a plan is managed and carried out properly, it is not a good plan” all echo the frustration with training, communication and implementation of PBIS communicated in the earlier Likert scale data.

Several staff mentioned that they appreciated the structure, tiers and common language of the PBIS system. One respondent highlighted that PBIS has simplified their practice when it comes to presenting behavioral expectations to classes. “The short, simple statements of target behavior make it fairly easy to communicate expectations to most students.” Another staff member pointed out that the “strong framework” helps them “understand tiered behavior and chooses varied interventions required at different levels of intensity/severity.” One staff member summed up how their practice has changed as “I use the tiers to clarify which behaviors are tier 2 or 3 situations, but I usually am able to use expectations/consequences built into my classroom routines which have been effective.” The idea that PBIS’s Tier 1 should work for a majority of students in the classroom level is represented in this answer.

Conclusion

My objective in carrying out this research project was to dig into the philosophy, history and different ways of implementing PBIS and collect qualitative data on staff attitudes across a variety of grade levels and disciplines. I have presented summaries of the data collected both from Likert scale statements and free-form long answer response questions in the hope of finding trends and through-lines that begin to answer the research question of “*How has PBIS impacted educator practices?*” In Chapter 5, I will further discuss major learnings, implications of the

study, possible limitations of the study, and potential areas for future research on PBIS. Finally, I will reflect on my own process of enacting this action research.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

Overview

In the previous chapter, I outlined the results of my qualitative study of colleagues in the hope of gaining insights on the research question of “*How has PBIS impacted educator practice?*” In the data examination process I was able to identify common trends, opinions and feelings about how Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports are cultivated, communicated, and supported in my school setting. I was also able to glean information on staff attitudes across a wide range of grade levels and disciplines about PBIS as a philosophy and initiative, and how it has changed or influenced the way they do things in school. In Chapter 5, I will reflect on the process of action research with colleagues as well as outline major findings of the study. I will also address possible implications and limitations of the study and speculate on possible next steps as I continue on my educational journey.

Reflections on the Capstone Process

I embarked upon this capstone journey nearly a year ago, in the summer of 2019. It had been nearly a decade since I had last been a graduate student, and I had never enrolled in an online class like the Practicum of Summer 2019. Needless to say, there was a bit of a learning curve as I re-acclimated to being a student. However, I found myself catching on to the process and quickly getting to the heart of my passions and reasons for educating when choosing and developing my area of research. I found that I was able to think back and remember why I chose to become a teacher in the first place, as well as reflect on a decade-plus of professional and life experience. In that time, I also experienced great personal and professional growth and change as a result of evolving attitudes in education which sought to address inequities. In this reflection process, I remembered early experiences with punitive behavior management and, and my background in social justice advocacy. I recalled instances in my life as a student where I saw unjust handlings of behavior and the societal structures that enable them. These experiences drove me towards my calling as a special education teacher with an emphasis on behavior management and education. Once I became an educational professional, I gathered first hand experience of seeing the systems at work that enable inequitable treatment of students of color to continue, despite the best efforts of well-meaning initiatives and staff members. PBIS has been one of those initiatives that has sought to address these inequities, so at the beginning of my research journey I decided I'd focus my research question around PBIS and justice in education.

As I began to zero in on a more specific focus, I initially planned to define the nebulous concept of success, and what elements make a behavioral management system successful as well as fair and equitable. My initial focus of defining success proved to be too broad of an undertaking, as PBIS can be successful in different ways depending on the setting in which it is

deployed; also, “success” can mean too many different things. For example, an educator may define success of their behavior management system by looking at data on whether their students comply with directives. That same system may generate compliance, yet could be based in fear of punitive measures, manipulation, or coercion. As a result, many classrooms with “successful” behavior management systems which claim positivity may not be rooted in the PBIS ethos whatsoever.

However, my capstone team was instrumental in helping me hone my focus into a question that was more personal and relevant—resulting in my research question of “*How has PBIS impacted educator practices?*” My first chapter detailed my core beliefs of fairness and equity in education, the driving forces behind my decision to become a teacher. I also discussed moments in which I noticed those beliefs not being propped up by the actions of coworkers/administrators in the earliest days of my teaching career. I have noticed over the course of over ten years that many teacher attitudes towards behavior and punishment have evolved, my own included, and that this change is owed at least in part to the longtime implementation of PBIS. As the initiative has helped mold and shape my own practices, I sought to gather information on how it has done that for other educators as well.

Literature Review Recap

In Chapter Two, I conducted a literature review to further explore my research question. The process was illuminating and interesting. I set out to provide a primer for the history and background of PBIS, as well as review scholarly work on elements that make PBIS effective. I looked over the techniques that are often present in PBIS systems and provided an overview for effective PBIS implementation across different age groups and classroom settings, as well as for

different disability areas within the purview of special education. In the interest of providing a balanced view, I also sought out writing which was critical of PBIS to paint a fuller picture of the initiative and its possible shortcomings, flaws, or pitfalls. Not all areas of Chapter 2 were equally represented in my action research; however, I have noted several areas of the literature review that were especially reinforced by the action research. My data collection showed a variety of attitudes and messages which are discussed at greater length in the Major Findings section of Chapter 5.

PBIS Defined. I frequently remembered my review of the literature on the architecture and intentions of PBIS as I conducted my action research. As I planned to survey a wide range of educators of different disciplines, experiences and age groups I recalled what I had learned about PBIS as a non-prescriptive ideology which requires systemic buy in and implementations at both macro and micro levels. According to the National Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, the purpose of their work was to “disseminate and provide technical assistance to schools on evidence-based practices for improving supports for students with behavioral disorders” (Engness, 2014, p. 9). Those improvements could take different forms based upon the needs of students in different settings or buildings at different levels of success in implementing behavior management programs. Administrators and teachers have a responsibility to make PBIS work. Administrators need to believe in its mission and set building-wide expectations, as well as collect data, and train and recognize staff in the same positive ways that staff may recognize students; teachers are responsible for being conscious of design of physical environment in their classrooms and teach predictable routines as well as 3-5

setting-specific positive expectations for students to know and follow (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2019).

I addressed these learnings about PBIS in my study and put them into practice both in the Likert scale statements and the short answer questions. Staff were asked to rate how well administration believe in the PBIS philosophy, collect data, and provide education and support/training in an effort to gauge educator attitudes of how well Lincoln runs their iteration of PBIS from the top. Staff were also given the opportunity to share how they differentiate PBIS to work for their specific age groups, classes, and disability areas (when applicable).

Critiques of PBIS. The second sub-topic of the literature review addressed common critiques of PBIS. The information gathered was wide-ranging and full of salient points; the writers of the literature critiquing aspects of PBIS were hardly burnt-out teachers demanding greater student punishment, but scholars addressing common pitfalls that I and the survey group both have witnessed in action throughout our educational experiences.

One of the most common critiques of PBIS is that it over-incentivizes students with extrinsic and tangible rewards to the point that they become dependent upon it and do not learn to manage their own behaviors without external reinforcement. Students may get accustomed to doing things correctly not because they are right, but because of the material reward (which often grows to students needing more frequent reinforcement) and squashing development of intrinsic motivation (Bruhn, et al, 2014, p.13). Bruhn, et al (2014) continued in sharing a story of a parent who felt the system could be dehumanizing. The parent compared PBIS to “training a dog,” and assuming that all students need prizes to participate in expected behaviors can underestimate or disrespect those students who have developed more intrinsic motivation already (13). PBIS

sometimes requires a healthy dose of extrinsic motivation for reluctant students who struggle with behavior self-management, but these caveats remind educators to have a plan for moving away from extrinsic motivation in order for the behavioral lessons they aim to teach to transfer forward and remain with the student after the candy jar is empty.

Another common critique is that PBIS, in all its non-prescriptive looseness, does not provide enough support to educators trying to implement it effectively. Variability in implementation, competence of staff and types of tools used and their validity can allow for a wide variety of outcomes from setting to setting (Samuels, 2013, p. 15). However, PBIS trainers could also err on the side of being *too* prescriptive in pushing forms of the initiative that may work in some settings but not others (Samuels, 2013, p. 5). Administrators are responsible for providing training and a guiding set of principles for a building, and teachers need to take those principles and define and modify them for their own purposes.

As PBIS can be a polarizing concept for educators, I was sure to give survey participants the option to sound off on this by offering a long answer question asking “What are your critiques of PBIS?” Responses varied from the administrative level to the more personal/local/immediate and were very familiar after returning to the Literature Review. In the Major Findings section I will delve into those responses further.

PBIS and equity. After exploring the definition and inception of PBIS, as well as critiques of it, I spent some time discussing PBIS’s roots in equity and explaining the phenomenon of the School-to-Prison Pipeline. I had hoped to provide some context for the larger societal reason that PBIS aims to reinvent how we think of discipline and behavior management in education.

A 2015 National Council on Disability report was the primary source for information on the School to Prison Pipeline, and defined it as such: “policies and practices that push our nation’s schoolchildren, especially those most at risk, out of classrooms and into the criminal justice systems (p. 5). PBIS, in its aim to positively rather than punitively respond to student behavior, has a goal of minimizing or abolishing this phenomenon. The report went on to cite “data-driven early warning systems” to identify at-risk students and provide them with more intensive supports and services in an attempt to keep students out of the pipeline (National Council on Disability, 2015, p. 9). This sounds an awful lot like the second and third tiers of PBIS. The review of this literature shows that PBIS works in concert with the goal of addressing the school-to-prison pipeline and that its first and foremost objective is equity in education. I attempted to include the topic of equity in the survey with Likert scale statements such as “PBIS is an effective way to promote equity in the classroom” and “I believe in the mission of PBIS.” I also was able to gather some educator opinions on PBIS and equity from the long answer questions soliciting critiques and asking about impact of PBIS.

PBIS across different educational settings. As discussed at length in multiple places in this capstone, PBIS is not a one-size-fits-all panacea that will magically teach the toughest students how to behave appropriately and manage their own behaviors overnight. It requires belief in its core mission, training, patience, and of course differentiation and flexibility. Many educators may need to add more tools to their repertoires, which relates to the research question *“How has PBIS impacted educator practices?”* In the Literature Review I investigated literature that aimed to lay out effective practices for different age groups and disability areas.

Students in elementary and secondary settings have different wants and needs and therefore any positive reinforcement system needs to take that into consideration. I reviewed a number of studies which outlined different strategies for including positive reinforcement into successful PBIS programs across different age groups. One study found that elementary students respond more to tangible rewards than older students (Sinnott, 2009, p. 23). This type of reinforcement works on a personal level, but also could be expanded to build community and get students to realize the impact of their behavior on the community at large (an example given was a class-wide ticket earning system in which the entire class earns a reward once a certain number of tickets are collectively earned). This can begin to teach good citizenship in younger students and tie positive behavior to a greater good (Sinnott, 2009, p. 25). In another study, Eber, et al (2002) found that secondary students presenting a need for positive reinforcement responded well to monitor slips and check in/check out systems and were motivated more by experiential or time-oriented rewards, such as free or choice time doing a preferred activity (5).

Another notable piece of the literature review also provided a comprehensive review of different disability areas present in classrooms, and strategies for supporting students with those disabilities within the three-tiered structure of PBIS. While Tier 1 of PBIS is designed to work for most students, many students with disabilities find themselves in the second and third tiers of PBIS and it is up to educators to be well-versed and ready to further differentiate for individual students.

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Other Health Disability (OHD; mainly Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) were the main disabilities on which the literature focused, as students with those disabilities frequently have

difficulties with behavior and impulsivity. Many students in these disability areas can be effectively served with similar strategies under the PBIS umbrella. For example, students with EBD require a high level of fidelity and structure/predictability—so staffing classrooms for students with EBD with highly qualified teachers and providing frequent quality training to them so they have all the tools necessary to provide expert-level service to their students (Benner, et al, 2010, p. 86). One could say the same about students with ASD, as those students may be prone to being overwhelmed by too many things being asked of them and could benefit from a more structured and predictable environment. The PBIS best practice (adopted from the writings of Jean Piaget) of 3-5 simple and positively stated rules with frequent review and revisiting can especially help students with ASD avoid overstimulation and overload (Crossen & Grant, 2014, p. 5). Finally, the literature that focused on Other Health Disability (specifically ADHD) focused on ways to help build and incentivize self-monitoring of behaviors, as students with ADHD can be impulsive and need assistance making good behavioral choices. Check in/check out systems which allow students to track their own behaviors across classrooms, and home, can help get students with impulsive behaviors to start to think about their behavior and on the road to greater self-monitoring (Haraway, 2012, p. 18-19).

I integrated this reality into the survey by asking educators spanning across 7 grade levels about their positive reinforcement plans and strategies. The hope was to investigate whether some of the techniques uncovered in the literature review were represented or confirmed. Special education teachers were heavily represented in the survey group as well as I hoped to come away with further confirmations or additions to the literature review.

Factors that help and hinder PBIS implementation. The Literature Review included a section focusing on literature that sought to discover and list factors that both help and hinder PBIS programs. By investigating these I hoped to gather, especially with the helping factors, some possible answers to the research question *“How has PBIS impacted educator practices?”* Some of the factors that can determine the success or failure of PBIS programming that came up in the literature review are summarized below.

The research found that administrators carry a great deal of responsibility for making sure PBIS programs run effectively. One helping factor was principal buy-in and competence in professional development and implementation of building-wide initiatives, complete with frequent trainings and follow-up/positive recognition of staff (McIntosh, et al, 2016, p. 4). Principals and administrators also shared that mining each other’s experiences and learning from other administrators can help them develop strategies for their own setting (McIntosh, et al, 2016, p. 4). Once trained, fidelity to the system is another helping factor. Educators who stick to the script and consistently run their system as intended “[play] a significant role in reducing problem behaviors” and this allowing classes to function more effectively (Benner, et al, 2010, p. 94). While this responsibility lies on the shoulders of the classroom teacher, it begins at the top with clear-eyed, focused leadership.

Hindering factors included philosophical opposition to PBIS, either as a system or due to some of the critiques addressed earlier in the literature review such as teachers finding it unacceptable to reward students with behavior difficulties for following basic expectations while other “good kids” go unrecognized (Mathews, et al, 2014, p. 5). Other educators may be more of an “old-school” mindset and subscribe to a more punitive way of thinking about behavior and

choose to push back against PBIS (McIntosh, et al, 2016, p. 17). It may seem obvious that a behavior management system that has teachers rebelling against its implementation is doomed to fail, but it was valuable to see literature confirming the spread of a phenomenon that all teachers have witnessed amongst their colleagues at one point or another.

In the survey, I represented this portion of the literature review by getting a read on staff attitudes about administration and their role in making PBIS happen. Four of the Likert scale statements asked staff to rate administration on their belief in PBIS, sufficiency of training and professional development, as well as their handling and implementation of the system. I also asked staff to share their own helping and hindering factors throughout the long answer questions.

Major Findings

In this section I will present major findings of my study that answer the research question *“How has PBIS impacted educator practices?”* The qualitative data offered many common sentiments about how educators have changed or modified their practices as a result of PBIS, and also left some questions and wonderings. Many of these questions and wonderings could be addressed through further research; however, the findings presented are those from the initial study alone.

PBIS has provided a framework that gives staff autonomy and stylistic freedom.

PBIS is a valuable framework that staff may need to take initiative to make their own. Over 75% of educators in the survey answered positively to the statement “PBIS is an effective framework for managing student behavior.” 75% responded that they agree with the mission of PBIS, as well. This level of support is crucial to get the system running in a more effective manner. Many

staff in the short answer portion of the survey used the terminology of “effective framework” or “basic framework” to describe PBIS, and that they used their professional experience to flesh out the framework. “It provides a framework for understanding Tiered behavior and the varied interventions required to address needs at different levels of intensity and severity” is a good summation from one staff member. They continued on to say that “[getting] staff on the same page regarding how Tier 2 and 3 should look is an ongoing conversation,” indicating that educators may interpret Tiers 2 and 3 differently depending on their style, standards and setting.

Staff members surveyed feel confident in tailoring PBIS to their specific settings.

Most staff feel confident in their ability to run PBIS within their classrooms or areas. This was a very seasoned group of educators (80% had been teaching for over 10 years); thus, it can be inferred that because of the wealth of experience and the accumulation of large “educational toolboxes” this survey group felt particularly confident in taking a nonspecific set of guidelines and making it their own. Over 75% of survey respondents said that their students could name 3-5 positive behavioral expectations taught in their classrooms or areas. A vast majority of staff expressed familiarity with the building-wide tenets of PBIS at Lincoln (Respectful, Responsible, Ready to Learn) and also felt that they were able to tailor these guiding principles to individual groups of students with varying needs. For example, one teacher of younger students reported focusing on “stay in your area/don’t interrupt/hands to yourself” as those students may need to work on the foundational basics of being respectful and responsible. However, another teacher of upper high school students highlighted more academic expectations (“be on task/be engaged/work together as a group”).

The same held true for development of incentive programs, a necessary part of PBIS for reluctant learners and students who have not yet developed consistent self-management skills. While there are building-wide positive reinforcement initiatives such as Gold Cards (entered in weekly drawings), many students need different motivators at different intervals—and it's often on the classroom teachers to figure out what those are. Lincoln educators shared a variety of incentives, from tangible items (food items, pencils, small toys) to more time/activity-based motivators (free time on computer or in gym), all based on student choice. Still others mentioned positive phone calls home or eating lunch with students who earn it as motivators. As all students will not want to work towards the same thing, staff must be willing to discuss and develop agreeable incentive programs with individual students who need them. This requires flexibility and knowledge of students, something of which this experienced group of educators seems to have a great deal. These findings confirm my literature review of PBIS's history and foundations as it is a non-prescriptive guiding ideology that allows for modification based upon student needs—meeting students where they are at currently to help them progress to greater autonomy in behavioral self-management.

Educators lean on each other and use each other's expertise as resources. Many educators surveyed at Lincoln felt that they felt comfortable utilizing the experiences and wisdom of colleagues as their first intervention when they encountered difficulty implementing their behavioral management system. When asked what their first step is when a behavior management system isn't working, over 60% of educators surveyed mentioned that they bring their concerns to a colleague. Many times the colleagues mentioned were the behavioral specialist, special education case manager or paraprofessional. The consistency of the responses

like this indicate that messaging on the procedure for managing Tier 2 and 3 behaviors is getting through from administration (despite the critiques of the consistency of administrative implementation shared elsewhere in the survey). However, these responses also included more informal conversations with other colleagues not in a behavior management or special education position. Lincoln staff in the survey indicated a willingness to “pick the brains” of other teachers or staff who may be doing something differently and more successfully with some students and their behaviors.

Due to the setup of the building, educators at Lincoln often find themselves leaning on staff in close proximity to them, who are members of their interdisciplinary team (IDT). Interdisciplinary teams are one way that staff members at Lincoln can modify PBIS for different grade levels and populations. 62.5% of staff surveyed said that their IDT planned to proactively manage student behaviors. The value of having all teachers of a grade level who share the same students meeting once a week cannot be overstated, and many educators shared that they leaned on their fellow IDT members first when they needed assistance with a behavior-related challenge. Survey respondents found it beneficial to be able to discuss with fellow educators who teach the same students successes, struggles, and strategies and modify their practice accordingly in the pursuit of more success in dealing with more difficult behaviors.

PBIS has had negative impacts on some educator practices. Many of the critiques of PBIS unearthed in the literature review were represented in the data collected from the survey. From the worries that PBIS is overly rewarding of students who manipulate the system with tangible items, to concerns of equity, to educators unwilling to buy in, there was much in the way of staff responses that indicate PBIS is not a perfect system.

The concern that some forms of PBIS can cause students to become too dependent on extrinsic or tangible motivators was present in the survey: “PBIS can over-incentivize students with tangible rewards. It can be hard then to get away from extrinsic motivators.” Some staff expressed frustration about how PBIS focuses on rewarding students with problematic behaviors rather than focusing on the kids who regularly follow directions. “PBIS rewards kids who misbehave for following basic rules and sometimes leaves out the kids who are consistently doing the right things.” Others lament that while PBIS works for a majority of students, there is a small percentage of students whose behavior does not change but who take up a majority of staff energy: “same bad kids running around in the hallway, same bad kids mouthing off to staff members.”

PBIS is an initiative based around equity. There is some disagreement on whether PBIS is equitable to students of color, or whether it tacitly assumes that the bar is lower for expectations of behavior for students of certain backgrounds. One survey respondent mentioned that in their opinion, PBIS does not work well for students of color. Other staff worry that a perceived lack of bottom line consequences insufficiently prepares Black and African American students for a society that is more punitive and not full of second chances. Administration has clearly made efforts to reduce exclusionary discipline such as suspensions for African American students, but several staff members voiced their concerns that in the absence of consistent and strong Tier 2 and 3 interventions in the place of suspension, PBIS has not been effective for students who otherwise would be suspended for behaviors. One respondent shared that PBIS “works for the majority of students” but that kids with “the most chronic and severe behaviors fall through the cracks,” which speaks to issues with Tier 2 and 3 implementation. Since PBIS is

supposed to be differentiated for those most at risk, these concerns indicate that there is room for growth in ensuring Lincoln's system is more equitable.

PBIS requires educators to wear many hats: academic content expert, mediator, cheerleader, behavior coach. For staff members who have been around long enough to see this shift from older systems where kicking students with challenging behaviors out of class to become someone else's problem to PBIS, their practices have been changed in what they see as a negative way. "It has made classroom management more difficult." "It creates frustration for me." "I will be happy to be leaving soon for my well-earned retirement." Some educators see their positions as strictly academic, and believe that they should not have to deal with behavior (not unlike the old model of sending a student to a principal's office or behavioral staff for a consequence). Staff answering in this manner seemed to think that their practice has been negatively impacted by PBIS as they feel that they have lowered academic rigor or standards as they spend more instructional time on behavior management.

Staff want to know whether they are implementing PBIS correctly and effectively.

Administrative support, training, and data collection are crucial to the success of PBIS. In the staff survey, attitudes about the adequacy of administrative professional development and coaching were more negative than positive. Attitudes about data collection were similarly negative. Over 50% of survey respondents were critical of how well expectations are communicated building-wide, sharing that they either are not clearly communicated at all or inconsistently delivered. 58% answered negatively when asked about whether they believed they received an appropriate amount of training on common expectations. A majority of respondents did say they felt that expectations are communicated effectively at the interdisciplinary team

level, but educators like to know whether they're doing it right at that level and would like more confirmation from administration. A majority of survey participants answered that they think administration believes in PBIS and its mission, which is the most important thing—with more communication they may feel validated and confident in pressing on with their own sub-programs, knowing that they are operating within the spirit of the building expectations.

Possible Implications

Based upon educator feedback in both the Likert scale statements and extended answer questions, there are several implications that come to mind going forward as Lincoln continues to develop its building culture while using PBIS as a cornerstone. As everything flows from leadership, many of these implications have to do with administrative vision and communication of PBIS expectations. Administration should be very clear in their vision of PBIS for their entire building. Many teachers and staff feel left to their own devices in coming up with positive behavioral interventions for their area of the building, which can result in very inconsistent expectations from classroom to classroom based on educator comfort level and competence. On that note, principals must believe in the mission of PBIS and communicate often with staff as well as provide training for educators at all levels of experience and comfort with PBIS. There is room within the system to make it one's own based on individual student needs, but directives need to come from above to allow educators to feel empowered to do that and feel as if they are correctly operating within the larger building-wide PBIS system.

Administrators and interdisciplinary team leads should collect behavioral data meticulously. Having consistent systems where all behavior is documented can help identify students in need of Tier 2 and 3 supports, as well as allow educators to learn from each other and

identify antecedent events or triggers for students. For example, if a child is displaying behaviors worthy of Tier 2 or 3 intervention in one class but no others, the teacher of that class can reflect on possible reasons for the behavior and modify the setting or their practices accordingly, as well as lean on the experience and techniques of their colleagues who have had more success with the student.

Possible Limitations

This study does have several demographic limitations. I set out to gather a diverse group of educators of different races and genders who spanned across several content areas and worked in different capacities and grade levels. The reality of the responses that came back showed that the demographics of the study were not as diverse as I had envisioned. Of the 82 educators I invited to participate in the study, slightly less than 50% completed the survey (40 individuals).

Racially, the group was overwhelmingly White. 82.5% of survey respondents identified as Caucasian. While a 2017 survey done by the U.S. Department of Education found that 80% of teachers nationally are White (EdWeek, 2017), I had hoped to assemble a more diverse coalition to get a wider variety of views in my survey. PBIS aims to combat the school-to-prison pipeline, which specifically impacts students of color, and overall it aims to address disparities in school discipline which disproportionately harm African American students. Therefore, it would have been ideal to gather more views of educators who identify as Black or African American.

Men were overrepresented in the survey as well, at 57.5%. Data from the 2017 Department of Education study showed that nationally, 77% of teachers are women. The Lincoln survey group was only 37.5% female. Also, while staff in all grade levels at Lincoln were represented in the study, the survey group was heavily and disproportionally weighted towards

ninth grade educators. 35% of survey respondents were ninth grade staff. I teach ninth grade and am embedded in their interdisciplinary team, and it makes sense that staff who work more closely with me are more likely to accept the study invitation.

As a result of these demographic imbalances, the study indeed could have some limitations. Not having enough non-white voices represented can mean that more educators answering the survey questions are coming from a more privileged place, and may be less likely to empathize with students who struggle to behave appropriately due to social factors that they have not experienced or don't fully understand.

In regards to the heavy weighting towards educators of a certain grade level, it can warp or distort perceptions of building-wide attitude or opinions. We may get a skewed picture of how staff feel about PBIS implementation based on the views and perceptions of one sub-group. Like any group, interdisciplinary teams are not immune to internal politics and group-think; if enough people from one group "pile on," the schoolwide data collected might not be as representative of the whole as initially thought.

Next Steps

I plan on sharing this information with members of the survey group and other educators in my building in the hope of sparking discussion about PBIS and how we can continue to move in a way that makes our approach to behavior at Lincoln more positive and equitable. Major takeaways and other data will also be shared with interdisciplinary team leads so they can recognize what we are doing well in that arena and improve upon areas for growth, such as data collection.

I have learned a great deal about the history and strengths of well-run PBIS programs throughout this process, both through literature review and action research drawing upon the shared experiences of the survey group. The experience has been a good “refresher” for my own practices. Remembering the reasons why we subscribe to PBIS at Lincoln and keeping its best practices in mind will continue to inform my planning, instruction, and interactions with students moving forward. While PBIS has always been a shaping force on my practice, this capstone has ensured that it will remain in the front of my mind rather than in the back of it.

I would also like to discuss with administration some of the concerns brought by members of the survey group in an effort to improve communication and training on PBIS from the building level. Many educators across disciplines and grade levels have echoed similar concerns to each other, with some even unsure of what PBIS entails (even though many of them were implementing elements of the system unconsciously). Increased and improved training opportunities and professional development would be a positive outcome of communicating this data to administration. Another positive administrative next step would be formalizing and standardizing data collection on behaviors. If there were a building-wide data collection method used by all interdisciplinary teams, staff could more readily identify and analyze which students are in need of Tier 2 and 3 supports and begin to give them what they need.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reflected on my capstone process and development of research question, revisited the literature review, and outlined the major findings, implications and next steps that came out of my action research. I analyzed my action research results and how they connected and related to the literature review as well as the research question *How has PBIS impacted*

educator practices? As this capstone process comes to an end, I have gained many insights on how my colleagues have been shaped and impacted as professionals by the PBIS initiative, as well as reflected at length on my own development as an educator and how much of that I owe to PBIS. I move forward with a renewed sense of purpose as I remember why I began the journey of teaching in the first place. I hope that I can share this new expertise to improve my school climate for staff and make it a better place for students. Finally, I hope to continue growing and learning as I continue to modify and change my practices to be more fair and equitable to my students.

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APPENDIX A

PBIS Team Implementation Checklist (TIC 3.1)

This checklist is designed to be completed by the PBIS Team once a quarter to monitor activities for implementation of PBIS in a school. The team should complete the **Action Plan** at the same time to track items that are In Progress or Not Yet Started items.

School: Coach: Date of Report:
 District: County: State:
 Person Completing Report:
 PBIS Team Members:

Complete & submit to coach quarterly.					
Status: A = Achieved, I = In Progress, N = Not Yet Started					
Date:					
ESTABLISH COMMITMENT					
1. Administrator's Support & Active Involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admin attends PBIS meetings 80 % of time Admin defines social behavior as one of the top three goals for the school Admin actively participates in PBIS training 	S t a t u s :				

2. Faculty/Staff Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of faculty document support that school climate/discipline is one of top three school improvement goals Admin/faculty commit to PBIS for at least 3 years 	S t a t u s :					
ESTABLISH & MAINTAIN TEAM						
3. Team Established (Representative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes grade level teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, parents, special educators, counselors. Team has established clear mission/purpose 	S t a t u s :					
4. Team has regular meeting schedule, effective operating procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenda and meeting minutes are used Team decisions are identified, and action plan developed 	S t a t u s :					
5. Audit is completed for efficient integration of team with other teams/initiatives addressing behavior support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team has completed the "Working Smarter" matrix 	S t a t u s :					
<p style="text-align: center;">Complete & submit to coach quarterly. Status: A = Achieved, I = In Progress, N = Not Yet Started</p>						
Date:						
SELF-ASSESSMENT						
6. Team completes self-assessment of current PBIS practices being used in the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team has completed a TIC, BoQ or SET within the past 12 months. 	S t a t u s :					

7. Team summarizes existing school discipline data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team uses office discipline referral data (ODR), attendance, & other behavioral data for decision making. 	S t a t u s				
8. Team uses self-assessment information to build implementation Action Plan (areas of immediate focus) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team has an Action Plan guiding implementation of PBIS with specific actions scheduled to be performed. 	S t a t u s :				
ESTABLISH SCHOOL-WIDE EXPECTATIONS: PREVENTION SYSTEMS					
9. 3-5 school-wide behavior expectations are defined and posted in all areas of building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-5 positively and clearly stated expectations are defined. The expectations are posted in public areas of the school. 	S t a t u s :				
10. School-wide teaching matrix developed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching matrix used to define how school-wide expectations apply to specific school locations. Teaching matrix distributed to all staff. 	S t a t u s :				
11. Teaching plans for school-wide expectations are developed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesson plans developed for teaching school-wide expectations at key locations throughout the school. Faculty is involved in development of lesson plans. 	S t a t u s :				
12. School-wide behavioral expectations taught directly & formally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule/plans for teaching the staff the lessons plans for students are developed 	S t a t u				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and students know the defined expectations. • School-wide expectations taught to all students • Plan developed for teaching expectations to students to who enter the school mid-year. 	s :				
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Complete & submit to coach quarterly. Status: A = Achieved, I = In Progress, N = Not Yet Started					
Date:					
13. System in place to acknowledge/reward school-wide expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reward systems are used to acknowledge school-wide behavioral expectations. • Ratio of reinforcements to corrections is high (4:1). • Students and staff know about the acknowledgement system & students are receiving positive acknowledgements. 	S t a t u s :				
14. Clearly defined & consistent consequences and procedures for undesirable behaviors are developed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major & minor problem behaviors are all clearly defined. • Clearly defined and consistent consequences and procedures for undesirable behaviors are developed and used. • Procedures define an array of appropriate responses to minor (classroom managed behaviors). • Procedures define an array of appropriate responses to major (office managed) behaviors. 	S t a t u s :				
CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR SUPPORT SYSTEMS					
15. School has completed a school-wide classroom systems summary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching staff has completed a classroom assessment (Examples: SAS Classroom Survey, Classroom Systems Survey, etc.) 	S t a t u s :				

16. Action plan in place to address any classroom systems identified as a high priority for change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of the assessment are used to plan staff professional development and support. 	S t a t u s :				
17. Data system in place to monitor office discipline referral rates that come from classrooms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School has a way to review ODR data from classrooms to use in data based decision making. 	S t a t u s :				
18. Discipline data are gathered, summarized, & reported at least quarterly to whole faculty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection is easy, efficient & relevant for decision-making ODR data entered at least weekly (min). Office referral form lists a) student/grade, b) date/time, c) referring staff, d) problem behavior, e) location, f) persons involved, g) probable motivation, h) consequences and i) administrative decision. ODR data are available by frequency, location, time, type of problem behavior, motivation and student. ODR data summary shared with faculty at least monthly (min). 	S t a t u s :				

Complete & submit to coach quarterly.					
Status: A = Achieved, I = In Progress, N = Not Yet Started					
Date:					
19. Discipline data are available to the Team regularly (at least monthly) in a form and depth needed for problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team is able to use the data for decision making, problem solving, action planning and evaluation. Precision problem statements are used for problem solving. 	S t a t u s :				

BUILD CAPACITY FOR FUNCTION-BASED SUPPORT					
20. Personnel with behavioral expertise are identified & involved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personnel are able to provide behavior expertise for students needing Tier II and Tier III support. 	S t a t u s :				
21. At least one staff member of the school is able to conduct simple functional behavioral assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one staff member can conduct simple behavioral assessments and work with a team in developing behavior support plans for individual students 	S t a t u s :				
22. Intensive, individual student support team structure in place to use function-based supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A team exists that focuses on intensive individualized supports for students needing Tier III supports. The team uses function-based supports to develop, monitor and evaluate behavioral plans. The team delivering Tier III has a data system that allows on-going monitoring of the fidelity and outcomes of individual behavior support plans. 	S t a t u s :				

Additional Comments & Information:

PBIS Action Plan

Only include those items in Team Implementation Checklist that are marked “In Progress” or “Not Yet Started”

Activity	Activity Task Analysis (What)	Who	By When
1. Administrator’s Support and Active Involvement			

2. Faculty / Staff Support			
3. Team Established (Representative)			
4. Team has regular meeting schedule, effective operating procedures			
5. Audit is completed for efficient integration of team with other teams /initiatives addressing behavior support			
6. Team completes self-assessment of current PBIS practices being used in the school			

7. Team summarizes existing school discipline data			
8. Team uses self-assessment information to build implementation Action Plan (areas of immediate focus)			
9. 3-5 school-wide behaviors expectations are defined and posted in all areas of building			
10. School-wide teaching matrix developed			
11. Teaching plans for SW expectations are developed			

Activity	Activity Task Analysis (What)	Who	By When
12. SW behavioral expectations taught directly and formally			

13. System in place to acknowledge/reward SW expectations			
14. Clearly defined & consistent consequences and procedures for undesirable behaviors are developed			
15. Team has completed a SW classroom systems summary			
16. Action plan in place to address any classroom systems identified as a high priority for change			
17. Data system in place to monitor office discipline referral rates that come from classrooms			
18. Discipline are gathered, summarized and reported at least quarterly to whole faculty			

Activity	Activity Task Analysis (What)	Who	By Wh
19. Discipline data are available to Team at least			

monthly in a form and depth needed for problem solving			
20. Personnel with behavior expertise are identified and involved			
21. At least one staff member of the school is able to conduct simple functional behavioral assessments			
22. Intensive, individual student support team structure in place to use function-based supports			

APPENDIX B**PBIS Survey for School Staff**

Please fill out the survey as honestly and thoroughly as you can. All responses are confidential. Thank you for helping me collect data!

*** Required**

Email address *

Your email

Number of years working in schools *

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ >20

What grade level do you teach?

- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ Other...

Race/Ethnicity *

- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Asian American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Other...

Gender *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: _____

Content area

Your answer _____

Statements about PBIS *

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
PBIS is an effective framework for managing student behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
PBIS is an effective way to promote equity in the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
PBIS works for a majority of students when properly implemented.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe in the mission of PBIS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My administrators believe in the mission of PBIS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My school offers an appropriate amount of professional development on equity and cultural literacy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school offers an appropriate amount of coaching on common expectations and behavior management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student behavior is handled fairly at the building-wide level.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My students can name 3-5 of the expectations for behavior in my classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My IDT team discusses student behavior and proactively plans to manage student behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with how my team collects data on behaviors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with schoolwide data collection on behaviors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My team has systems in place to acknowledge and reward following expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My team has clearly defined and consistent consequences for undesirable behaviors in place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discipline data is gathered and analyzed at least quarterly with my team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My team has at least one member proficient in developing behavioral plans for students needing Tier 3 supports.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What are your critiques of PBIS?

Your answer

What types of positive reinforcers do you use for students at the tier 2 and 3 levels?

Your answer

How have you used PBIS to foster positive classroom culture?

Your answer

What are your 3-5 positive behavioral expectations?

Your answer

How do you try and move students from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation in your classroom?

Your answer

Do you feel that expectations of how to manage behavior are clearly communicated?

Your answer

What tools or techniques do you use to track behaviors? *

Your answer

When a behavior management technique is not working, what are your next steps? *

Your answer

How do you measure whether your behavior management system is successful? *

Your answer

How has PBIS impacted your practice as an educator?

Your answer